UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 01779508 9

HANDBOUND
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO PRESS

455
NO TRIAL
19
8874

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

By THOMAS BALGUY, D. D.

Archdeacon and Prebendary of Winchester, and formerly Fellow of St. John's College, in Cambridge.

If I could flatter myſelf that theſe Eſſays have any Merit, it is in ſteering between the Extremes of Doctrines ſeemingly oppoſite; in paſſing over Terms utterly unintelligible, and in forming a temperate, yet not inconſiſtent Syſtem.

Pope.

456267
13.1.47

WINCHESTER:

PRINTED FOR LOCKYER DAVIS, IN LONDON,

PRINTER TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

MDCCLXXXV.

BX
5133
B36

TO THE

KING.

SIR,

I Should not have preſumed to offer theſe Diſcourſes to your MAJESTY, if I had not been perſuaded, that they might be of ſome ſervice in ſupporting the cauſe of RELIGION and VIRTUE. I knew they could have no ſtronger recommendation to your MAJESTY.

Permit me, SIR, to expreſs in this public manner the lively ſenſe I entertain of your MAJESTY's repeated favours: particularly of your goodneſs

neſs both in naming me to a high ſtation in the Church, and in allowing me to decline it. Nothing could be more flattering than the offer made me; or more acceptable, in my infirm ſtate of health, than the leave given me to cloſe my days in privacy and retirement. I cannot but be proud of the honour I have received, and forward to profeſs, on all occaſions, the inviolable attachment and gratitude with which I am,

SIR,

Your MAJESTY's

Moſt dutiful

Subject and Servant,

THO. BALGUY.

CONTENTS.

Three DISCOURSES preached before the UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE.

DISCOURSE I.

ON the different Characters of Age and Youth. p. 1.

1 Cor. xiv. 20.

In malice be ye children, but in underſtanding be men.

DISCOURSE II, III.

On the Vanity and Vexation of our purſuits after Knowledge. p. 20, 34.

Eccleſ. i. 18.

For in much wiſdom is much grief: and he that increaſeth knowledge, increaſeth ſorrow.

Two

Two DISCOURSES preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of WINCHESTER.

DISCOURSE IV.

Preached in 1763.

On the Anniverſary of the Reſtoration of King *Charles* II. p. 53.

2 Sam. xix. 30.

Yea let him take all, foraſmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own houſe.

DISCOURSE V.

Preached December 13, 1776.

Being the Day appointed by Authority for a General Faſt, on Account of the American War. p. 70.

Acts vii. 26.

—Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

Two

Two DISCOURSES preached in LAMBETH CHAPEL, and publiſhed by Order of the late Archbiſhop.

DISCOURSE VI.

On Church-Authority. p. 86.

Preached at the Conſecration of *Jonathan Shipley*, D. D. Lord Biſhop of *Landaff**, in the Year 1769.

Heb. xiii. 17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves: for they watch for your ſouls.

DISCOURSE VII.

On the ſame Subject. p. 109.

Preached at the Conſecration of *Richard Hurd*, D. D. Lord Biſhop of *Lichfield* and *Coventry* †, and of *John Moore*, D. D. Lord Biſhop of *Bangor* ‡.

1 Pet. ii. 13.

Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.—

* Now Bp. of St. Aſaph. † Now Bp. of Worceſter.
‡ Now Archbiſhop of Canterbury.

Two DISCOURSES preached at the ARCHDEACON'S VISITATION, in the Years 1776 and 1782.

DISCOURSE VIII.

On the Difficulties which attend the Study of Religion. p. 129.

Iſaiah xlv. 15.

Verily thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf, O God of Iſrael the Saviour.

DISCOURSE IX.

Of Salvation through Faith in Chriſt. p. 146.

Eph. ii. 8.

By grace ye are ſaved through faith.

Seven CHARGES, delivered to the CLERGY of the ARCHDEACONRY of WINCHESTER.

CHARGE I.

On the Character and Conduct of a Miniſter of the Goſpel. p. 167.

Delivered at the Archdeacon's Primary Viſitation, in the Year 1760.

CHARGE

CHARGE II.

On the Nature and End of the Chriſtian Revelation. p. 186.

Delivered in 1763.

CHARGE III.

On Religious Liberty. p. 208.

Delivered in 1766.

CHARGE IV.

On the diſtinct Provinces of Reaſon and Faith. p. 231.

Delivered in 1769.

CHARGE V.

Of Subſcription to Articles of Religion. p. 252.

Delivered in 1772.

CHARGE VI.

On the true Value of Faith and Morals. p. 281.

Delivered in 1778.

CHARGE

CHARGE VII.

On the Sacraments. p. 295.

Delivered in 1781.

CONCIO habita in Templo Beatæ Mariæ,

Anno 1758.

Pro gradu Doctoratûs in Sacrâ Theologiâ.

MATT. vii. 16.

Ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεθε αὐτούς.

p. 321.

DIS-

DISCOURSE I.*

The different Characters of AGE and YOUTH.

1 COR. xiv. 20.

In malice be ye children, but in underſtanding be men.

IT has been obſerved by a celebrated writer, that *Youth is the ſeaſon of virtue.* He *might* have obſerved, with equal truth, that it is the ſeaſon of *vice;* ſince every age of human life has vices, as well as virtues, which are almoſt *peculiar* to itſelf. The decay of our minds is not, like that of our perſons, uniform and general: for here the grace which one feature loſes, is frequently tranſferred to another: ſingle parts may grow de-

* Preached before the late Duke of *Newcaſtle*, Chancellor of the Univerſity, in the year 1754.

formed or diſproportioned; while the ſum of beauty continues ſtill the ſame through the whole period of our exiſtence.

There is as little reaſon for the reflections we often hear on the improvement or decay of *national* merit. Kingdoms, as well as men, have their different ſtages, of infancy, of maturity, of old age: and each of theſe is by turns admired or cenſured, according to the different point of view in which it is conſidered. Some applaud the induſtry and frugality of a riſing people; and complain without ceaſing of the effeminacy and luxury of more poliſhed times. Others again are delighted with the improvement of arts, the extenſion of commerce, the refinement of manners, which are found in a ſettled and flouriſhing ſtate; and look back with contempt or pity on the ignorance and barbarity of their anceſtors. Both have a ſhew of reaſon, and they have only a ſhew of it, on their ſide. The circumſtances they obſerve are, indeed, what they ſeem to be: but the obſervers are deceived, when they draw a general concluſion from an imperfect and partial view.

There

There is no time of life, in which human virtue is not expoſed to difficulties and dangers: but it is never expoſed at any one time to dangers of every *kind*. Our trials are various; but they are ſucceſſive: and we have no ſooner removed one obſtacle in our road to perfection, than we are croſſed by another. Hence the Scriptures have taught us to conſider the whole courſe of our lives as one continued *warfare*. The different enemies we have to encounter, do not attack us with united force; but come on ſingly to the charge: their attacks however follow, one after another, without any interval or intermiſſion; we are ſubject to perpetual alarms and fears, and it requires our utmoſt vigilance to make good that poſt, in which we are ſtationed by the decrees of heaven.

It is the buſineſs then of a chriſtian, who is ſincere in his profeſſion, and animated by the proſpect of that immortal prize, which will one day be the reward of his labours, to compenſate the diſadvantages of his ſituation, by the ſteadineſs and reſolution of his conduct. For, however he may be *tempted*, he is not *compelled* to be vicious. He may,

if he pleaſes, acquire thoſe virtues, which are moſt uncommon in the ſtation he poſſeſſes; and forbear thoſe vices, which are moſt peculiar to it. The taſk indeed is difficult: but it is great, it is glorious; it is worthy the ambition of a man and a chriſtian.

Agreeably to this repreſentation, the apoſtle exhorts us to *unite* in our characters, qualities which are uſually found *ſeparate*, the Benevolence of Youth and the Wiſdom of Age. If we reſign ourſelves to the dominion of chance and nature, and leave our manners to be formed, as it may happen, by the different circumſtances of life: we ſhall begin our courſe with a fooliſh and undiſcerning generoſity, we ſhall end it with a ſelfiſh and malicious prudence. But though this be the natural courſe of our paſſions, it is not the courſe preſcribed to them by reaſon and religion. Theſe will teach us to diſtinguiſh in both characters between what is valuable, and what is hurtful; to be children in malice, and yet men in underſtanding.

At our firſt entrance into the theatre of the world, the novelty of the objects with which

which we are ſurrounded, inſpires us with alacrity and joy. Every ſtep we take diſcloſes to us ſome new ſcene of delight and pleaſure: and this conſtant ſucceſſion of agreeable ſpectacles prevents all ſuſpicion of the dark and gloomy proſpects, which are ſoon after to open on our view. Hence, from a thoughtleſs gaiety of heart, we are pleaſed, we are *ſatisfied*, with every trifling occurrence; and miſtake empty ſhew and parade for ſolid happineſs. Such a diſpoſition of mind, though ſpringing only from ignorance and inexperience, is yet extremely favourable to our ſocial paſſions. Chearfulneſs and good-nature are almoſt inſeparable companions. The more eaſily we are *pleaſed*, the more apt we are to *love* and to *forgive*; the more willingly we open our hearts to ſentiments of generoſity and friendſhip. The joy we feel in our breaſts will not be confined there; but naturally overflows in grateful acknowledgments to thoſe who have been the authors or inſtruments of it, and in kind offices to all around us. Unaccuſtomed to *ſuffer* harm, we are unapt to *ſuſpect* it; and he who is free from ſuſpicion, is free from malice.

Such is the amiable picture of human nature, as it comes freſh out of the hands of its Maker, unſpoiled by the converſe of men, and the dear-bought experience of the ways of the world! — But now that very ſituation, which (from the conſtitution of our nature) gives birth to ſo much virtue and ſo much happineſs, is (through our own neglect) almoſt equally fruitful in vice and miſery. For, as a balance to theſe ſingular advantages, Youth is expoſed to ſingular diſadvantages, and ſurrounded with dangers on every ſide. The want of experience, the imperfection of reaſon, the impetuoſity of our paſſions, all conſpire to divert us from our deſtined courſe, and engage us in a life of diſorder and folly.

If virtue and benevolence were ſynonimous terms, we muſt unavoidably give the preference to our *firſt* years, beyond every ſucceeding part of human life. But neither is *all* virtue benevolence; nor is benevolence of *every kind*, and under *all circumſtances*, juſtly intitled to the name of virtue. It is virtue to purſue, by juſt and rational means, our *own* welfare and happineſs: it is vice to neglect this end, or to ſacrifice it to our paſſions.

paſſions. It is ſurely virtue, both to cultivate in our breaſts, and to expreſs by our words and actions, a ſerious regard to the *Governor* of the world: and it is vice in the higheſt degree, to forget Him that made us; to be unmindful of His power, and unthankful for His goodneſs.—On the other hand, it is *not* virtue, from whatever principle we act, to partake in the faults and follies of others; to comply with men's humours, in oppoſition to their intereſt; or to promote the intereſt of thoſe we love, by actions deſtructive to the whole community. In ſhort, benevolence, *of itſelf*, is perfectly indifferent; as much ſo, as any other paſſion: it then only merits our approbation and applauſe, when it uniformly ſubmits to the direction of reaſon.

Affection is a blind and undiſtinguiſhing principle; ſolicitous only for immediate gratification, and inattentive to future dangers. A kind heart, without a ſound judgment, is almoſt as likely to do harm as good. Nay it may juſtly be queſtioned whether malice itſelf has been productive of greater miſchiefs to mankind than undiſcerning and thoughtleſs

friendſhip. Sometimes it engages us to injure *ourſelves*, without any real advantage to others; ſometimes it defeats *its own end*, and proves fatal to thoſe whom it means to ſerve: and very frequently it leads to a violation of thoſe univerſal rules of truth and juſtice, which are the ſupport and ſecurity of *every ſocial good*.

But the circumſtance which deſerves our chief regard, is the tendency of this miſguided principle, to cut off the very *means* by which it ought to have been regulated; to prevent or retard our progreſs in *wiſdom*. If we have too haſtily yielded up our hearts to the firſt ſeducers whom chance has thrown in our way; we might yet guard againſt the ill effects of our choice by juſt reflection and attentive obſervation, were it not the nature of *paſſion*, to miſrepreſent its own object. But the inclination we have conceived, however unreaſonable, will ſeldom fail to *juſtify* itſelf; will enable us to diſcover imaginary virtues, and make us blind to real faults; blind too to every ill effect either of imprudent confidence, or unbounded indulgence. Nor can any thing but experience open our eyes: a guide which

which only juſt *ſhews* our error, when it is too late to *repent* of it.

Benevolence then, when joined with folly, can never form a virtuous character. Let us now turn our thoughts to a different proſpect, and conſider the union of wiſdom and malice. The former, as we have ſeen, is the character of *Youth:* the latter too often takes place in our *riper years.*

Length of days, among numberleſs other diſadvantages, is almoſt ſure to be attended with diſguſt and ſatiety. Men are convinced from repeated trials of the inſignificance, and folly, and emptineſs, of the purſuits, the paſſions, the joys of Youth: and they are exceedingly apt, when they have made this diſcovery, to be chagrined and ſoured with the diſappointment. In this diſpoſition of mind, they are prone to receive ill impreſſions, and to view every object in an unfavourable light: quick in diſcerning faults and errors, ſlow in acknowledging, and even in perceiving, merit.—Add to this, that experience has taught them to be cautious of truſting to fair appearances, to doubt the ſincerity of the ſtrongeſt profeſſions; and to impute

pute the moſt ſpecious and plauſible actions to ſome latent principle of intereſt or paſſion. And, having loſt their taſte for thoſe pleaſures, which they had once purſued with ſo much ardour, they are forced to ſubſtitute in its place a new ſet of deſires and inclinations. Wealth and power are now conſidered as the ſupreme ends, the moſt important buſineſs of life: and the purſuit of theſe weakens every ſocial attachment, and affords perpetual occaſions of ſtrife and enmity. The companions of our *Youth* are recommended and endeared to us by the ſhare they take in our pleaſures: we naturally conceive an eſteem and affection for thoſe who are partners in our joy. But, in our *riper years*, they who aim at the ſame objects with ourſelves are conſidered, not as partners, but rivals: and he who owes his ſucceſs to *our* diſappointment, is the object not of eſteem, but of envy and hatred.

Thus are men gradually formed to a contracted, a ſelfiſh, a malicious temper of mind: and the wiſdom which ought to have directed them in the purſuit of general happineſs, becomes an inſtrument in their hands of vice and miſery. The improvement of their underſtanding

derſtanding ſerves to no other purpoſe, but to render them more artful and more ſucceſsful in doing miſchief. And, what is worſt of all, their inclination to miſchief increaſes with their ability. The more they *know* the world, the more they *hate* it. That ſuperior ſkill and diſcernment, which is the reſult of long experience, diſcovers to their view every imperfection, every foible, of human nature: and ſince even the *beſt* characters will not ſtand the teſt of a ſtrict and rigorous inquiry, *every* character, without exception, is expoſed to their diſlike and averſion; and they ſearch in vain through the whole compaſs of the world, without being able to find one ſingle object, which may merit their eſteem and approbation.

What now can be expected from the moſt improved underſtanding, when joined to ſo unhappy a temper? It may indeed ſecure its poſſeſſor from the artifices of his enemies, and the treachery of his friends. But will it ſecure to him the peace of his own mind? Will it not rather expoſe him to perpetual vexation, and ſupply him with conſtant occaſions of fretfulneſs and diſquiet? Will it not deprive him of that beſt and nobleſt pleaſure, which either

either earth or *heaven* is capable of yielding, the conſciouſneſs of *loving* and being *beloved?* On the other hand, *ſociety* is ſure to ſuffer from ſo depraved a ſtate of our affections and paſſions. For it is a vain and fooliſh pretence, to ſay (as ſome have done) that we love the ſpecies, though we hate the particulars of which it is compoſed. Benevolence muſt riſe from individuals to the public: and it is abſurd to imagine, that, while we fall ſhort of the lower and ordinary degrees of it, we can yet arrive at its ſupreme excellence, the very ſummit and perfection of human virtue.

Let not then thoſe qualities be ſo unnaturally divorced from each other, whoſe union is ſo eſſential to the welfare of mankind. Let us ſtrive, while we are young, to improve in wiſdom; let us ſtrive, when we are old, to improve in goodneſs. In both caſes we ſhall ſtrive againſt the bent of our paſſions: but, where reaſon and religion call, the difficulty of the taſk is a motive to vigilance and reſolution, not to remiſſneſs and neglect.

It is needleſs to point out the particular advantages, which would reſult from a conjunction

junction of these virtues. Every one discerns, at first sight, that, if the inclination to do good, and the capacity of doing it meet, at once in the same person, they will mutually support and assist each other. Could we discern, on the one hand, all that warmth of benevolence, all those kind and amiable sentiments, which shine forth in the pride and bloom of Youth; on the other, that strength of judgment, that consummate prudence, which is the defence and ornament of age: how must such a character strike us with veneration! what happy effects might not be expected from it to each individual, who should share in its influence! what lasting benefit to mankind in general, from so eminent an example in virtue!

But it is high time to apply this subject more directly to our own use. It is incumbent on *us*, in a peculiar manner, both to be children in malice, and men in understanding. For the improvement of the understanding is the immediate end for which these societies were instituted: and the improvement of the heart is the necessary condition, without which the highest intellectual endowments are acquired in vain. And as we lie under

peculiar

peculiar obligations, we have alſo peculiar encouragement and opportunity, to unite in our characters extenſive knowledge and fervent charity. It is not to be wondered, if men's tempers are ſoured by the croſſes and diſappointments of a buſy and active life: but in theſe calm and retired ſhades, which are ſacred to contemplation and peace, where we are deſignedly ſecluded from thoſe purſuits which engage the bulk of mankind; what excuſe, what *pretence*, can we allege for the prevalence and growth of unfriendly paſſions? The buſineſs in which we are employed, (or in which we *ought* to be employed) affords few occaſions of competition: and will naturally inſpire us with no other ſtrife, than a virtuous emulation in the purſuit after knowledge; with no other ambition, than that of *diſtinguiſhing* ourſelves by ſuperior degrees of wiſdom and goodneſs. The fruits and rewards of *our* induſtry are not, like thoſe of other profeſſions in life, private property: every acquiſition in knowledge is an addition to the common ſtock, and increaſes the fund of literary wealth. Let us not then imitate the faults of others, whilſt we are free from the temptations to which they are expoſed. But

let

let us make the beſt uſe of the opportunities we enjoy; and try to arrive at maturity of underſtanding, while we are yet infants in malice. "For though we ſpeak with the tongues of men and of angels; — though we underſtand all myſteries, and all knowledge; — if we have not charity, we are nothing." *

And as knowledge in *general* is vain or hurtful, when not attended with good-will to mankind; ſo are all thoſe *parts* of knowledge either frivolous or miſchievous, which are incapable of producing any good effect. It may indeed be queſtioned, whether *any* ſort of *true* ſcience can juſtly fall under this imputation. All its various branches apparently tend to the improvement of our faculties, or the regulation of our conduct, or the invention and cultivation of thoſe arts, which multiply the conveniencies or the ornaments of life, and enrich the community of which we are members. But there is a *ſpurious*, a *counterfeit* wiſdom, which is the ſource only of diſſenſion and hatred, of vanity and folly. — It has often been objected to theſe ſeats of learning, that the maxims they inſtil, the arts they cultivate, the manners they form,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

are

are unfavourable to *ſocial* life. That, inſtead of furniſhing men with a large ſtore of ſound and uſeful knowledge, and enabling them to apply it to great and valuable purpoſes; they have trained up their diſciples in all the idle pedantry of an empty and unprofitable erudition, of a vain and contentious Theology. That, inſtead of inſpiring them with the brighteſt flames of piety to God and charity to man, they have too often kindled in their hearts the blind rage of religious controverſy, taught them to aſpire at eccleſiaſtical fame by breaking through the ties of civil ſociety, and qualified them to be leaders of ſedition and faction, rather than miniſters of peace and love. Yet let not *true* knowledge loſe her praiſe, from the indiſcretion and folly of falſe pretenders: let not *pure and undefiled* religion partake in the cenſure which they incur, who unjuſtly aſſume the name and garb of religion. It is not knowledge, but *ignorance*, which makes men vain, and inſolent, and impatient of contradiction. It is not religion, but *impiety*, which makes tham *dare* to expect the favour of God, while they are ſubverting the repoſe and happineſs of mankind. "The wiſdom which is from above is peaceable, gentle,

"gentle, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocriſy."* — *This* is the wiſdom which we profeſs; *this* is the ſcience we ought to ſtudy. And, among all the various objects of our purſuit, there is none more great, perhaps none more difficult, ſurely none more important, either to ourſelves or the world. The fruits of our other occupations are confined within a narrow compaſs: this only extends to every part of life, to every ſcene of things which can be offered to our view, to every private or public ſtation to which we can poſſibly be called.

We ſhould make it then our firſt and chief care, to ſecure the poſſeſſion of this *heavenly* wiſdom. But let us not ſtop here. The ſcience of the *heart* deſerves the higheſt place in our regard: but *no* ſcience will deſerve our neglect, which is ſubſervient to the ſame great end, the happineſs of mankind.

And as we ought to conſult the intereſts of ſociety in the *choice* we make of our ſtudies:

* James iii. 17.

ſo alſo ſhould we uſe our utmoſt caution, to prevent the *general* ill effects of a ſtudious and contemplative life; that it may neither render us unfit for the intercourſe of the world, nor obnoxious to the diſlike or contempt of thoſe, who are engaged in different functions. — Let us ſtrive then to adorn the dignity of our profeſſion with all the graces of refined and cultivated humanity. Let us temper the ſeverity of a *philoſophic* retirement with the innocent chearfulneſs of an *active* and *ſocial* life. Let us ſmooth and ſoften the rigours of virtue by a prudent accommodation to the *indifferent* manners and cuſtoms of the age and country in which we live. Let us remember that we are citizens as well as ſcholars; and leave to monks and hermits the fond perſuaſion, that they ſhall merit heaven, by tormenting themſelves and perſecuting their brethren. Be it *our* taſk, to extend the bounds of ſcience, to vindicate the honour of our holy religion, to form the minds of the riſing generation to every private and every ſocial virtue. While theſe employments are diſcharged with fidelity and prudence, they can never expoſe us to diſgrace

grace and cenſure; nay, they will juſtly intitle us to protection and favour. And happy it is for us, that living, as we do, under the influence of a wiſe and juſt *government*, we have no *ſurer* method of obtaining protection, than by deſerving it!

DISCOURSE II.*

Of the VANITY and VEXATION of our Purſuits after KNOWLEDGE.

ECCLES. i. 18.

For in much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow.

THE *ſubject* of this book is the ſupreme happineſs of man. The *writer*, a perſon poſſeſſed of every advantage, which either nature, or fortune, or grace itſelf could give. The *reſult* of his inquiries, That *all* the various objects of human wiſhes, when conſidered independently of *religion*, are but *vanity and vexation of ſpirit*. — Among the experi-

* Preached before the Univerſity.

ments

ments he made to ſatisfy himſelf on this important point, one of the firſt which occurred was, * *to ſeek and ſearch out by* wiſdom *concerning all things that are done under heaven.* But when he had *ſeen all the works that are done under the ſun*; when † *God* had given *him underſtanding exceeding much—even as the ſand that is on the ſea ſhore, — and his fame was in all nations round about:* he was forced at laſt to come to this melancholy concluſion, that *in much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow.*

Different ſituations and circumſtances expoſe men to different temptations. There is indeed ſcarce any ſpecies of vice or folly, which does not wander, at ſome time or other, into every rank and profeſſion of life. But yet each has its *peculiar* abode, where it takes up its *uſual* reſidence, and reigns with a more entire and deſpotic ſway. Avarice, ambition, voluptuouſneſs, ſeem to have little buſineſs in *this* place, where there are ſo few occaſions to call them forth into action: and we are

* Eccleſ. i. 13, 14. † 1 Kings iv. 29, 31.

therefore leſs concerned than other men, in the inſtructions and cautions, which religion provides for our defence againſt them. But if there *be* ſuch a vice as *intemperance in the purſuit of knowledge*, *here*, one would think, is the proper ſcene for it to appear and act; and *here* therefore it may not be loſs of time to conſider the doctrine advanced in my text, and ſee if we can apply it to our own uſe.

The world in which we live was certainly not intended for a ſtate of bliſs. If we ſet out in life with this falſe notion of it, *whatever* mark we aim at, and *whatever* rout we purſue, we ſhall be ſure to find ourſelves diſappointed. The *goods* of the *mind*, as they are uſually termed, may be more ſpecious and reputable, but are not leſs empty and unſatisfactory, than thoſe of a meaner claſs. They may furniſh us, like other objects, with uſeful excitements to action; they may do, what others can *not* do, *enable* us to act ſuitably to the ends of our creation. But they can never ſerve, for they were not deſigned to ſerve, as a foundation for ſincere and permanent happineſs; and they will generally produce, as a balance to the fleeting pleaſure they bring, much

much inconvenience, which might have been avoided, much anxiety and care, to which the bulk of mankind are perfect ſtrangers. Whoever purſues knowledge with the ſame ardour, and the ſame ſucceſs, as *Solomon* purſued it, will hardly fail of concluding as he did, *all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit.**

That we may examine this ſubject more diſtinctly, it muſt be obſerved, that the pleaſure we find in the acquiſition of knowledge is of a *mixed* kind. We are pleaſed with every new diſcovery, becauſe it gratifies our *curioſity:* we are pleaſed with the *conſciouſneſs* of ſuperior abilities; pleaſed with the *reputation* of them: and we have additional pleaſure from the proſpect of thoſe *external* advantages, which are ſuppoſed to be the *rewards* of intellectual improvements. Let us conſider each of theſe ſources of pleaſure in its turn, and try whether any, or all of them be able to yield us *that happineſs* we ſeek.

1. The pleaſure of gratifying our *thirſt after truth* is ſhort and momentary. As the

* Eccleſ. i. 4.

enjoyment ariſes from the appetite, it dies in the very inſtant of gratification. However we may be delighted with the acquiſition, knowledge once *acquired* becomes flat and inſipid. Whilſt the object of our deſires is placed at a diſtance, we follow it with eagerneſs; and are glad to purchaſe it almoſt at any price: but when once we come to *poſſeſs* it, it charms no longer. This obſervation has been often made, with regard to poſſeſſions of an *inferior* kind; it will be found equally true, when applied to *intellectual* acquirements. Thoſe large fields of ſcience, which excite the envy and admiration of others, afford no joy to the owner. *He* views them with as little rapture, as the owner of a palace feels from the beauty of its ſtructure: which is beheld indeed by ſtrangers with wonder and delight; but the vain inhabitant reaps no other ſatisfaction, than what ariſes from the oſtentatious diſplay of his wealth and greatneſs. Juſt ſo the poſſeſſor of *ſuperior knowledge* is delighted, if he *be* delighted, not with the intrinſic value of his acquiſitions, but with the homage and veneration which he hopes to receive from the reſt of the world.

Yet,

Yet, conſcious of the inſignificance of what we have already gained, the more we *know*, the more we *wiſh to know*. Not only becauſe curioſity, like other paſſions, acquires freſh ſtrength by indulgence: but becauſe every ſtep we take in the ſearch after truth, enlarges our proſpects, and offers new objects to our purſuit. The moſt ignorant of mankind are always the leaſt curious. The man who is born *blind* may reſt contented and happy in his native darkneſs. But he who has a *glimmering* of the beauties of nature, will *wiſh* to ſee them more diſtinctly: and the more he ſees, the more *impatient* he will grow to extend and improve his views. The various branches of truth are ſo cloſely connected, that the anſwer to one queſtion uſually makes way for another. When we have gained the point which was immediately before us, we are led on by it to ſomething further; and the very ſolution of our difficulty engages us in a freſh diſquiſition. Thus may our whole lives paſs on, in a conſtant ſucceſſion of doubts and diſcoveries, without ever reaching any permanent ſatisfaction.—So that the appetite after knowledge is exactly of the ſame nature with thoſe which aim at inferior objects;

objects; and the gratification amounts to nothing more, than the removal of an uneasiness, which still *returns*, and (like the miser's thirst after gold) is perpetually *increased* by the very means which are taken to remove it.

2. But is there not a pleasure of a more *lasting* kind, which the wise man enjoys from a just sense of his own *superior abilities?* Alas! *this* is a pleasure, which *they* partake most largely, who have the *least* right to pretend to it. *True* knowledge will perpetually mortify us with the prospect of our own weakness and ignorance. They who have advanced the fartheſt, and seen the cleareſt, have of all others been most sensible, how very little lies within the reach of human faculties. Too little far, to make any important distinction between those who have it, and those who want it. Of all those bulky volumes, which carry in their appearance so much pomp and parade of learning, how few are there which contain more than a jingle of words? or serve to any better purpose, than to afford a harmless recreation to men who are weak enough to mistake words for things? Imagine a person whose head is crowded with systems of

of unmeaning jargon, and who prides himſelf upon it as a treaſure of ineſtimable value; imagine, if you can, that this profound philoſopher is convinced at laſt of the emptineſs and vanity of all his acquirements. Would the diſcovery *raiſe* him in his own opinion? Would he be thankful to his teacher for opening his eyes, and making him ſee and confeſs his own ignorance? Would he not rather exclaim, in the words of the poet, * "That his friends had *killed*, while they meant to *ſave* him?"

Now this very misfortune, though in different degrees, attends *all* thoſe, who make any conſiderable advancement in true wiſdom. They are perpetually finding that their paſt improvements were not near ſo great as they appeared to be. Though their *real* wealth increaſes, their *imaginary* leſſens: and perhaps they never appeared ſo rich in their own eyes, as when their whole ſtock was worth nothing.

* ——Pol me occidiſtis, amici,
Non ſervaſtis, ait; cui ſic extorta voluptas,
Et demptus per vim mentis gratiſſimus error.

HOR.

Nor

Nor is it only our ignorance, but our *errors* alſo, which the light of true wiſdom will enable us to detect. Indeed few errors can diſgrace us more, than to have imagined ourſelves wiſe, whilſt we were weak and ignorant. But, beſides this fundamental miſtake, we ſhall perpetually diſcover, as we improve in wiſdom, that we have embraced opinions on ſlight grounds, which a more careful inquiry will force us to reject; perhaps too that we have *maintained* with obſtinacy, what we muſt quit with ſhame. And in theſe circumſtances, few perſons will think it a ſufficient conſolation, that they can ſay with the philoſopher of old, "I am wiſer to-day than I was yeſterday." For, beſides that the reflection on his *paſt* folly muſt ever be painful to a man who affects the character of wiſdom, the more frequently we are deceived in the uſe of our underſtanding, the leſs *confidence* we ſhall place in it. That *godlike* faculty of *reaſon* (for ſo we affect to call it) will loſe its credit and its influence, when we find ourſelves perpetually deluded by hearkening to its voice; and, like a witneſs who has been frequently detected in falſhood, will not be believed even when it ſpeaks truth. Thus the

the ill ſucceſs of our paſt enquiries will be a clog to us in our future progreſs: and perhaps the fear of wandering from the right path may abſolutely *reſtrain* us from making any further advancement. If this be a juſt deſcription of the effects of *much wiſdom*, the pleaſure of ſelf-applauſe is not to be ranked among the advantages it brings: nor can it juſtly be aſſerted, that he, who *increaſes in knowledge*, increaſes in his *own eſteem*.

3. Let us ſee whether we have reaſon to expect better ſucceſs in procuring the eſteem of *others*.—It cannot indeed be doubted, that if we *fall ſhort* of the *common meaſure* of underſtanding, we ſhall incur the contempt of the world: but it is not equally evident, that if we *go beyond* that meaſure, we ſhall obtain reſpect and applauſe. For can you ſuppoſe, that the *greater* part of mankind will ſee and acknowledge your ſuperior merit? To ſuppoſe this, is to contradict the experience of all ages. *Non tam bene agitur cum rebus humanis, ut meliora* pluribus *placeant*. Whatever knowledge you poſſeſs, that lies beyond their reach, will be eſteemed whimſical or fantaſtical. The arguments you offer

fer in its ſupport, either will not be heard, or will not be underſtood, or will not be able to prevail againſt a much more powerful argument, which pride and ſelf-love will perpetually ſuggeſt.—Admit that ſome few perſons, of greater penetration, *diſcern* the merit of your diſcoveries; yet, ſuch is the malignity of the human heart, you have reaſon to fear, they will join their endeavours to blaſt a growing reputation, rather than lend a friendly hand to make it thrive and flouriſh. Every detection of error, every diſcovery of truth, as it tends to expoſe the folly and ignorance of others, is more likely to be eſteemed an inſult than a benefit; and they who have capacity enough to *underſtand* you, will, for that very reaſon, have pride enough to *contradict* you. He who goes about to deprive mankind of opinions which length of time has rendered dear and ſacred, engages in a thankleſs and an odious taſk: and the life of one man is much too ſhort a ſpace, for ſubduing effectually either the folly of the many, or the envy of the few. Poſterity indeed may be juſt and impartial: but the *preſent* age will ſeldom bear the luſtre of ſuperior wiſdom.

4. Yet

4. Yet, however we may be disappointed in the *pleasures* of knowledge, we shall have no reason to repent of our labours, if the *profits* she yields be large and certain. Let us observe then the effects of *much wisdom*, with regard to *external advantages:* let us consider it as a *mean*, not as an *end*. Thus perhaps it is *usually* considered, when men *first* engage in the pursuit of it. But when their curiosity is once raised, they soon forget the original motive, and follow truth for its own sake. And hence it frequently happens, that large acquisitions in knowledge are a real *impediment* to success in life. We too easily become enamoured of this ideal mistress; who, the moment we catch her, is sure to elude our grasp, and engage us in a chace which never ends. — He must be little sensible to the charms of truth, who can be solicitous about obtaining power, or wealth, or titles. A strong passion, of whatever kind, causes us to despise the objects of other passions: and much more will a fondness for intellectual pleasures, produce a hearty contempt for the mean and servile pursuits of the bulk of mankind. How then can it be expected that the lover of knowledge should exert

exert himſelf in the proſecution of thoſe ends, which appear unworthy of his care and regard? Or how can it be imagined, that the gifts of fortune ſhould be poured down upon his head, whilſt he refuſes either to *ſeek* or to *aſk* them? —— Suppoſe, if you pleaſe, that he is not wholly inſenſible to the *advantages* of a higher condition in life: yet ſtill he will be *averſe* from the *means* of obtaining them, and moſt probably *unqualified*. He will not ſacrifice his *time* to low cares and employments; he will not bend his *underſtanding* to the ordinary affairs of life; he will not, or he cannot, conform to the humours, and court the favour of the great. Add to all theſe advantages, that he will be *feared* by one part of mankind, perhaps *deſpiſed* by the other.

And ſee now, what is the mighty amount of this boaſted wiſdom? Short, deluſive, empty pleaſure, procured by long fatigue and application, and drawing after it either a total neglect of our intereſt, or an unſucceſsful purſuit of it.—Muſt we not own, with the Preacher, that *all is vanity*, when we find that *knowledge itſelf*, which might ſeem to bid

bid the faireſt for our eſteem, produces ſo little ſolid ſatisfaction? When he who has followed it as a ſubſtantial good, finds it to be little more than an empty name; the very *diſappointment* he feels will juſtify the cenſure in my text, *In much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow.*

But it is not only the *vanity* of knowledge, which brings concern and uneaſineſs to its deluded votaries. Beſides that it does not yield the joy it promiſes, it is in many different ways the occaſion of *ſorrow*. Indeed this has in ſome meaſure appeared from the obſervations already made; but will appear more diſtinctly, to him who conſiders, 1. That *all* the knowledge we *can* obtain is but little. 2. That, of this little, there is ſtill leſs, in which we can reſt with *aſſurance*. 3. And laſtly, that the few truths of moment which we *certainly* know, are ſuch as often fill the mind with painful reflections.

Theſe particulars, together with the practical concluſion to be drawn from the whole, will be conſidered on another occaſion.

DISCOURSE III.

On the ſame Subject.

ECCLES. i. 18.

For in much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow.

I Endeavoured to ſhew in my former diſcourſe the *vanity* of wiſdom: in this I am to conſider the *vexation* ariſing from it.

1. It is one occaſion of ſorrow, to him who increaſes knowledge, that *all* the knowledge he *can* obtain is but *little*.——We fancy, when we begin the ſearch after truth, that an unbounded proſpect lies open before us, in which we may range at pleaſure from one object to another, without either diſappointment

appointment or ſatiety. But though human curioſity has no bounds, human underſtanding is confined and weak: and they who cultivate it moſt ſucceſsfully, are moſt *ſenſible* of its weakneſs. The profeſſors of philoſophy, *falſly ſo called*, have a large and ſpacious empire; an empire which knows no other limits, than thoſe of the univerſe itſelf. But the dominions of *true* wiſdom are of ſmall extent. She is poſſeſſed of nothing but a few ſcattered diſtricts, ſevered from each other by vaſt tracts of *undiſcovered* land, where no human footſteps ever reached.

2. It would be ſome conſolation, in this intellectual poverty, if the little knowledge we are capable of acquiring could be *poſſeſſed* with *ſecurity*. — But *much wiſdom* will ſoon teach us to ſuſpect the moſt confident concluſions of human reaſon. When we reflect, how often we have embraced as clear and certain, what had no truth, or perhaps no meaning; it is impoſſible not to *fear*, that the opinions we *now* hold, may be equally precarious or vain. —— Now what can be more painful to a lover of truth, than this unſettled and wavering ſtate of mind? How

muſt he envy that confidence of folly, which is able to ſurmount every obſtacle, and is hardened againſt every attack of doubt, or even *ſuſpicion?* That ſlow, timid, cautious temper, which is the never-failing *reſult* of *much wiſdom*, if not the *condition* of acquiring it, is a temper which brings with it perpetual uneaſineſs, and deprives truth herſelf of the power of pleaſing. Whereas they who are able, after a ſhort and ſlight ſearch, to fix their opinions for life, enjoy even their errors with a happy tranquillity, which no force of reaſon can diſturb or ſhake.

Some perhaps may urge, in oppoſition to what is here advanced, that great Proteſtant principle, that all *neceſſary* truths are *plain*.—If it ſhould be thought improper to contradict a maxim, which is ſupported by names of the firſt reputation, and has been eſteemed a ſort of bulwark againſt Popery; yet ſurely we may ſay without offence, and with the concurring ſuffrages of all-thinking men, that many *important* truths are *difficult*. The evidence on which we receive them is not ſo clear and full, and the knowledge we can obtain of them is not ſo particular, as a philo-

philoſophical inquirer might wiſh to find it. We have light enough to ſhew us the way to eternal happineſs: but we have *not* enough to exclude the neceſſity of care and attention; and we have not enough either to ſatisfy our curioſity, or to convert faith into certainty.

3. *Some* truths indeed there are, of great moment, in which the mind may reſt with full aſſurance. But unfortunately they are *ſuch truths*, as we can never think of without *grief* and *pain*. We may be well aſſured of the infirmity of human nature; of the weakneſs of our reaſon; of the ſtrength of our paſſions; of the diſorder, and vice, and miſery, which prevail in the world: and the *greater* proficients we are in *wiſdom*, the more clearly we ſhall ſee, the more ſharply we ſhall feel, the emptineſs and vanity of *all* earthly things. *I have ſeen*, ſays *Solomon*, *all the works that are done under the ſun; and behold all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit.** —I ſhall lay no ſtreſs on the diſagreeable proſpect, which we may find in our own *breaſts*; on the follies and vices which diſturb our preſent peace, and endanger our future hap-

* Eccleſ. i. 14.

pineſs. For the ſame wiſdom, which diſcovers them to our view, may alſo enable us to ſubdue them: or, if ſhe finds *herſelf* too weak, may lead us to an *all-powerful* Protector, *whoſe ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs*. — But the thoughts and reflections of the wiſe man will not be *always* fixed on *himſelf:* and whenever he caſts a look on *the world about him*, he will either be led to pity the frailty, or deteſt the wickedneſs of mankind. If he conſider the preſent ſcene of things as *unconnected* with a *future*; what can be more trifling and contemptible, than the cares and fears, the hopes and joys, the buſineſs and the pleaſures of human life? If he conſider it again as a ſtate of *trial* and *diſcipline*, in which every ſingle perſon is either to gain or to forfeit an *happy eternity*; what can be more melancholy than the proſpect it yields? If he obſerve the young and gay, he will ſee little elſe than inattention and thoughtleſneſs, and diſſipation of mind. If he turn his eyes to the more ſerious part of his ſpecies; he may find them perhaps buſy and active: but too often buſy to no purpoſe, and acting without any regard to the true end of their beings. Inſtead of a diligent application

cation to the *great* buſineſs of life, that of forming themſelves to habits of piety and goodneſs; he will find them contending about trifles, eager to ſupplant and betray one another, learning nothing from experience but hypocriſy and knavery, and turning *that* diſpenſation of things, which was deſigned for the diſcipline of virtue, into a *ſchool* of immorality and vice. — Such is the picture of this preſent world, as it appears in the eyes of a *wiſe man!* Such at leaſt have the *wiſeſt* of men perpetually deſcribed it! whilſt thoſe of leſs diſcernment, or more confined views, can moſt advantageouſly ſupply the defects of their ſight by the illuſions of their fancy; and pleaſe themſelves with the proſpect of innumerable virtues, in almoſt every rank and condition of life: can ſee the leaders of civil factions acting only on public and diſintereſted motives; can ſee the breaſts of churchmen free from every ſecular care, and animated by no other paſſion, but zeal for the honour of their Maſter; can ſee ſoldiers ſhedding their blood out of zeal for national glory, and merchants traverſing the remoteſt regions from a deſire of increaſing the national wealth; can ſee the

ſtricteſt regard to juſtice and honour in the diſcharge of every *public* employment, and the moſt amiable ſincerity, the moſt engaging benevolence, in men's *private* intercourſe with each other. Or, if their own times, even on the ſlighteſt obſervation, ſhould appear to fall ſhort of theſe exalted ideas, the loſs is eaſily made up by an implicit confidence in romantic hiſtorians, and viſionary philoſophers.—We are told by hiſtorians, that there *was* a time, when virtue was neither to be alarmed by fear, nor ſeduced by pleaſure: when parſimony, and temperance, and contempt of wealth — when undaunted courage, and unbiaſſed integrity, and (I had almoſt ſaid) an *enthuſiaſtic* paſſion for public good, formed the prevailing character of a whole nation. — And from *ſuch* hiſtory no wonder we paſs with intire ſatisfaction to thoſe ſublime lectures of philoſophy, which inform us, that univerſal benevolence is one of the leading principles in human nature! Why ſhould we be diſturbed with what we ſee and hear of the wickedneſs of mankind? We have only to reſign ourſelves to theſe favourite guides, who can tranſport us at pleaſure into a golden age of innocence and virtue;

virtue; under *their* direction, we may mount into an imaginary region, where all around us will be ſerene and calm, and all the madneſs of this tempeſtuous world overlooked and forgotten. — Happy ignorance! Who would not wiſh to part with all the pride of wiſdom? who would not wiſh to return to the ſimplicity of his *childhood*, if he might but be ſecure of enjoying ſo pleaſing a dream? What can the moſt enlightened underſtanding give us in exchange for this tranſporting deluſion? If it can give *nothing*, all the labour we employ in the acquiſition of *knowledge*, is employed only in the purchaſe of *ſorrow*.

Shall we then conclude, that the moſt prudent courſe is to break off our purſuits after wiſdom, and ſit down contented in ignorance and folly?—The reflections above made may *ſeem* to lead, but they were not *deſigned* to lead, to this concluſion. Before we quit the ſearch after *truth*, it may be proper for us to conſider and reſolve, *What other* object we will ſubſtitute in its place? Shall we purſue fame, wealth, power, titles, pleaſure? Which of all theſe will beſt deſerve

deſerve our labour? Which of them will beſt reward our cares, and make us happy at the cheapeſt rate? Alas! *not one* of them can be exempted from the *general* ſentence; *vanity of vanities*, ſaith the preacher, ALL *is vanity*. We have illuſtrated the truth of this maxim in *one* inſtance, and ſhewn that the purſuit of *knowledge* will not lead to true happineſs. Would it have been harder to illuſtrate it in *other* inſtances? Would there have been any difficulty in diſplaying the vanity of *avarice* and *ambition*? of *luxury* and *ſenſuality*? Not only chriſtian preachers, but heathen moraliſts, nay heathen *poets*, have long ſince executed *this* taſk in the fulleſt and moſt effectual manner; effectual, I mean, to convince the *judgment*, though not to reform the *heart*. What then is to be done? If happineſs, though ſought with ſo much conſtancy and aſſiduity, is yet no where to be found, may we not as well *deſiſt* from the ſearch? May we not prudently reſign ourſelves to a thoughtleſs indolence, and laugh at the idle cares, which diſtract the reſt of mankind? — So far from it, that *this* reſolution would be the worſt of all. The vaineſt and wildeſt undertakings, which the moſt

moſt chimerical fancy can ſuggeſt, will be leſs deſtructive to our happineſs, and leſs repugnant to the ends of our being, than a life ſlept away in perpetual inaction. —— It remains then after all, that notwithſtanding the *vanity* of theſe objects; notwithſtanding they can bring no pleaſure, which is either *permanent* or *ſincere*—yet ſome or other of them *muſt* be purſued: and indeed *any* of them *may* be purſued both innocently and prudently. *They* only deſerve our cenſure, whoſe thoughts are ſo far taken up by theſe inferior goods, that they neglect *others* of infinitely greater moment; who expect to reap from earthly things that ſolid and laſting happineſs, which virtue *alone* can give, and virtue itſelf *cannot* give on this ſide the grave; who purſue the favourite object of their wiſhes without any *ſubordination* to thoſe *higher* views which religion inſpires, perhaps in direct *oppoſition* to them. To ſuch as theſe, reflections on the *vanity* of their hopes, and the *vexation* they muſt expect to find, either from diſappointment or ſucceſs, are both uſeful and neceſſary.

But

But nothing which has been ſaid ought to be any diſcouragement to thoſe who engage as they *ought* in the ſearch after truth. The ſame writer who expreſſes in ſuch ſtrong terms his ſenſe of the *vanity* of wiſdom, expreſſes in terms equally ſtrong his ſenſe of the *importance* of it. When conſidered as the great *end*, the *ſupreme happineſs* of man, it will be found *vain* and worthleſs: when conſidered as the means of improving our faculties, and moderating our paſſions; as ſerving to direct us in the diſcharge of our duty; to qualify us for the ſtation in which we are placed by providence, and to prepare us for an *higher* ſtation in the world to come. — When *thus* conſidered, and *thus* purſued, it will be found *important* enough to deſerve that preſſing exhortation, *Take faſt hold on inſtruction, let her not go; keep her, for ſhe is thy life.**

If there *be* thoſe, who would ſeparate the character of a *wiſe* from that of a *religious* man: if there be, who follow after wiſdom for *amuſement* only, not for *advantage*; or

* Prov. iv. 13.

for

for *ſuch* advantages as are foreign to the *main ends* of human exiſtence: if there be, who are directed, in the choice of their ſtudies, by no better guide than *accidental curioſity*; and follow this guide, wherever ſhe leads, to the *neglect* of *higher*, and *more important* engagements: if there be, who ſtudy every thing, *beſides their duty*; and are acquainted with every part of the creation, *except themſelves*, — all theſe may one day be convinced from their own experience, *That in much wiſdom, is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge increaſeth ſorrow.*

But they who cultivate their *underſtandings*, with a juſt regard to the improvement of their *morals*, will find *wiſdom* among the choiceſt gifts, which God has conferred on the ſons of men. For, beſides that it will prevent innumerable errors of *conduct*, beſides that it will raiſe us to a *higher rank* among moral agents, and qualify us to become candidates for a *greater reward*, it has an immediate and powerful influence in forming the mind to *habits of virtue*; in making men *humble*, *modeſt*, *charitable*; *moderate* in their deſires, *patient* of diſappointment; ſincerely and

and ſteadily *religious*. For the truth of all which obſervations, I might ſafely appeal to *experience*; I mean to the characters of thoſe, whoſe intellectual attainments have been carried to the greateſt height, and done honour to their ſpecies.

1. Much wiſdom will make us *humble*. — For *human* pride can reſt on no other foundation, than human ignorance. He who ſees and feels, at every ſtep he takes, the infirmity of his own nature; he who learns, from daily experience, the ſhortneſs and weakneſs of his faculties, how prone he is to the deluſions of fancy, how apt to be miſled by falſe lights, and how little able, with his utmoſt attention, to catch a few faint glimpſes of true knowledge: *he* ſurely will, of all men living, be the *leaſt* likely to ſet an immoderate value on his own accompliſhments.

2. Much wiſdom will make us *modeſt*. — They who have juſt entered the road of ſcience, as they are haſty in their *aſcent*, ſo they are raſh and confident in their *aſſertions*; and are apt to treat with *contempt* a doubtful and deliberate

deliberate hearer. But they who have travelled farther, and ſeen more, are ſlow and cautious. — The *wiſe* man will never give offence by arrogant *pretences* to wiſdom; or by an inſolent neglect and ſcorn of thoſe who preſume to queſtion the truth of his deciſions. For they cannot indeed pay him *leſs* deference, than he pays *himſelf*. Conſcious of his own fallibility, he is ſo far from *obtruding* his opinions upon others, that he is conſtantly lying at wait to *correct* them; and ſtudying to grow *ſtill wiſer*, from the converſation of the *ignorant*.

3. Much wiſdom will make us *charitable*. —For he who knows from his own experience the *difficulty* of arriving at truth, will not be *ſurpriſed*, that others fall ſhort of it: he who is fully acquainted with the deluſive ſhapes which error frequently wears, will not think the worſe of thoſe who admire and embrace it: he who has obſerved and felt the almoſt irreſiſtible force of education and habit, will not be apt to judge unfavourably of thoſe whom inveterate prejudices have bound faſt in darkneſs and ignorance. The wiſe man will pay little regard to all the various diſtinctions

tinctions of ſect and party, which ſo much divide and diſtract the world: diſtinctions often without a difference; almoſt always maintained with a heat and violence, which hardly any degree of difference is ſufficient to juſtify. He knows, that mankind are *uſually* divided rather about *ſounds* than *things:* he knows, that where the *diſpute* has a *real* object, yet the *evidence*, on both ſides, is often *fantaſtical:* he knows, that the *ſame* evidence, which is concluſive to *him*, has often appeared inconcluſive to *others*, though perhaps perſons of equal capacity, and equal induſtry, and, as far as appears, equal integrity with himſelf. — He will not therefore be forward to impute the miſtakes of his neighbour either to lightneſs of head or depravity of heart.

4. Much wiſdom will make us *moderate* in our deſires, and *patient* of diſappointments. — For both the purſuit and the poſſeſſion of knowledge have a natural tendency to *weaken* our *paſſions*; either by calling off our thoughts from the objects which inflame them, or by preſenting thoſe objects to our view in their proper colours. The breaſt of the

the *wiſe* man is ſecure alike from avarice and ambition, from love of pleaſure and love of fame; unleſs perhaps he ſhould retain too ſtrong a reliſh for the fame of wiſdom itſelf. Hence he will be free from the cares and toils, the temptations and dangers, the reſtleſſneſs and impatience of mind, which attend alike the buſy and the gay, when they catch with too much eagerneſs at theſe ſhadows of happineſs.

5. Much wiſdom will make us *pious*. — It is an old obſervation, That a *little* knowledge leads to *Atheiſm*: and it is not leſs true, that a *large* and *extenſive* knowledge will bring us back to *religion*; will make us good men, and ſincere chriſtians. Wiſdom will lead us from * *the things which are ſeen*, to *the things which are not ſeen*, to the † *eternal Power and Godhead* of the great Author of nature. Wiſdom will lead us from a juſt ſenſe of the weakneſs and *fallibility* of human reaſon, to a joyful and thankful reception of that *unerring* light which comes from heaven. Wiſdom will lead us from the con-

* 2 Cor. iv. 18. † Rom. i. 20.

ſciouſneſs of our own infirmities, to implore the aſſiſtance of that heavenly ſpirit, which alone is able * *to guide our feet into the way of peace.* Wiſdom, in ſhort, will lead us from a clear and full conviction of the vanity of all earthly things, to *ſet* our *affections on things above*; and to *preſs toward the mark*, with unwearied reſolution, *for the prize of our high calling in Chriſt Jeſus.* †

I ought not to diſmiſs this ſubject, without taking ſome notice of an objection, which will naturally ariſe out of what has been ſaid: I mean that the connection between *wiſdom* and *piety* will, in a great meaſure, be broken off by the habitual *doubt* and *caution*, which we have made ſo eſſential to the character of a wiſe man. — But whatever doubts he may have in *ſpeculation*, in *practice* he can have none. Place the degree of his aſſent as *low* as you pleaſe; nay ſuppoſe, if you *can* ſuppoſe it, that he eſteems the evidences for and againſt religion to be preciſely *equal:* yet ſtill he will judge himſelf under an unqueſtionable obligation of

* Luke i. 79. † Phil. iii. 14.

attend-

attending to its doctrines, and obſerving its precepts. — For wiſdom cannot be inconſiſtent with itſelf: cannot preſcribe, in *ſimilar* circumſtances, *oppoſite* rules of conduct. Yet we ſee that expectations many degrees more improbable, than what has been here ſuppoſed, are univerſally eſteemed ſufficient, in the common courſe of our lives, to determine the choice of a reaſonable man; and even to engage him in a long courſe of care, and labour, and ſelf-denial. Should any one decline an undertaking of apparent advantage, for no other reaſon, but becauſe he could not *demonſtrate* its ſucceſs, he would be eſteemed an ideot or a madman.— But indeed we have no reaſon to indulge our adverſaries in a ſuppoſition ſo unfavourable to our cauſe. True wiſdom, whilſt it prevents an ill-grounded confidence, is always found to produce a juſt and *rational* aſſent to the great truths of religion. And ſurely *real probability* is a better and a ſafer ſupport both of our faith and practice, than illuſive and fanciful *demonſtrations*. If *theſe* ſhould be ſubverted (as there is perpetual danger) by clearer views and deeper reſearches; the religion, which is built upon them muſt fall

to the ground: but a religion founded on *wiſdom*, the reſult of a careful, deliberate, impartial inquiry, is a firm and *ſteady* principle of action; though *the rains deſcend, and the floods come, and the winds blow*, it will ſtand unſhaken, for it is built *upon a rock*.*

* Mat. vii. 25.

DISCOURSE IV.

Preached on the 29th of May, 1763, being the Anniverſary of the RESTORATION of King CHARLES II.

2 SAM. xix. 10.

Yea, let him *take all, foraſmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own houſe.*

THESE words of *Mephiboſheth* ſeem to expreſs with ſingular propriety the ſentiments of the *Engliſh* nation on the return of their baniſhed ſovereign. The joy they felt from a revolution ſo long wanted, ſo impatiently deſired, made them prodigal of their rights and privileges. They

were ready at one ſtroke to give up *all*; that they might ſatisfy the demands, and even outrun the expectations, of greedy courtiers. No matter what burthens fell on them or their poſterity; no matter what they loſt or what they ſuffered: *foraſmuch as their lord the king was come again in peace unto his own houſe*.—It was happy for *us*, as well as them, that theſe overflowings of loyalty ſoon ſubſided, and the diſpoſitions of the people returned into their natural channel. Indeed they went farther than this; and extreme diſtruſt ſucceeded to extreme confidence. Very few years had paſſed after the acceſſion of this *popular* monarch, when an alarm began to be ſounded through every corner of the nation, as if both religion and liberty were at their laſt gaſp.——It may not be unſuitable to the deſign of our preſent ſolemnity,

I. To inquire what foundation there was for that extraordinary joy, which our anceſtors expreſſed on the return of their ſovereign.

II. To make ſome reflections on the folly they

they were guilty of in *expreſſing* their joy, like him in the text, by *unlimited* conceſſions.

I. To diſcern the foundation of this joy, we muſt recollect the ſtate and circumſtances of the times immediately preceding; and the alterations either produced or expected from the return of the royal family.

1. For many years paſt this unhappy nation had drunk deep of the calamities of war: of war attended with every circumſtance that could make the poiſonous draught either more bitter or more deadly.—The *ſcene* of this war was *England*. The bloodſhed was at our own doors; in the hearing and in the ſight of our wives and children. The *contending parties* were *Britons*. Every man's hand was againſt his neighbour and his brother. And, to cut off all poſſible conſolation from the unhappy ſufferers, the *iſſue* of the conflict could not but be fatal. For it was the conflict of tyranny on the one part, of anarchy on the other: of governors who ruled by will, not by law; of ſubjects who would not ſuffer the law itſelf to con-

troul their actions.—In ſuch a wretched and hopeleſs ſtate of things, it could not have been wondered, if men had patiently ſubmitted to the iron rod of a protector; much leſs that they rejoiced in the mild and gentle ſway (for ſuch they *hoped* to have found it) of a legal monarch.

This then was the *firſt* benefit expected from the return of the king—the reſtoration of PEACE. — Another advantage propoſed was,

2. The reſtoration of LAW and JUSTICE. —I am not ignorant, that, after the ſubverſion of regal government, our *courts* of law were kept open: and there ſeems reaſon to believe, that queſtions of private property were, for the moſt part, examined carefully, and decided honeſtly. But theſe deciſions reached no farther than to diſputes between *fellow ſubjects*. For *where* was the man, that *durſt* diſpute with his governors? Unleſs indeed he had an army at hand, ready to ſupport his cauſe! — Accordingly we find, that the extortions of *money* were both frequent and great; the ways of *collecting* it arbitrary and

oppreſſive; and the whole adminiſtration of *public juſtice*, not only defective, but *partial*. How indeed ſhould it be otherwiſe? For the flames of war, though ſometimes ſtifled, had never been extinguiſhed: and therefore the magiſtrate was of neceſſity to conduct himſelf as in an enemy's country; and every ſuſpected perſon was liable, of courſe, to forfeit life or goods at the diſcretion of the conqueror.

3. A third advantage was the reſtoration of MONARCHY, i. e. of a *ſettled* form of government; in oppoſition of thoſe ever-ſhifting ſcenes of anarchy and confuſion, which left men in perpetual doubt and dread, and deprived them of all reaſonable aſſurance, what courſe they might ſteer with ſafety.— It was not the recall of the *exiled family*, that produced ſuch tranſports of joy; a family, who had little pretenſions here either to eſteem or gratitude: but it was the recall of monarchy *itſelf*. Even *this* perhaps is ſaying too much. It was not the recovery of a particular *form* of government; but the recovery of *government* itſelf: which *could* not have been brought to a permanent eſtabliſhment

on

on any other plan. Monarchy was the *ancient*, the *legal*, form of our government; and might be expected to take root in its native soil, both more easily and more firmly, than any other political institution, which could be substituted in its place. Indeed, all things considered, there seems to have been no choice left: the nation *must* have done what they did, or have continued to suffer.

4. To these *civil* advantages we must add one more of a *religious* kind, which I shall beg leave to consider more particularly; I mean the restoration of the CHURCH. Not because it is the purest church in Christendom; not because it is formed on the model of primitive antiquity; not because its governors derive their authority, by an uninterrupted succession, from the apostles: but because it set men free from the nonsense of *Calvinism*, the madness of *Enthusiasm*, the terrors of *Persecution*; because it has given birth to a religion founded on reason, a religion which teaches, that a *life* of *virtue* is the most acceptable tribute we can pay to the Deity, and the most necessary condition of our eternal happiness.

I pre-

I pretend not that theſe things were brought about in an inſtant: there wanted another revolution to compleat the work. — Still we may affirm that a good beginning was made by the *reſtoration* of the *eſtabliſhed church*.

Whoever attends to the various modes of faith, which ſubſiſted in the times of confuſion, will find ſcarce *one ſect*, among the numerous ſpawn of Puritaniſm, which was not deeply tinctured with the religion of CALVIN: a religion which ſeems to have reſted on this execrable foundation, that God is a Tyrant. Why elſe did its teachers *delight* to repreſent him as governing by *will* only, not by *wiſdom?* Why elſe did their followers hope to obtain his favour by neglecting the buſineſs, or renouncing the pleaſures of life; and waſte *that* time in a ſcrupulous and painful attendance on lectures, and ſermons, and catechiſms, and all the drudgery of miſtaken piety; which *ought* to have been given to works of *charity* and *juſtice?* As if our Creator had placed us here only to give us *inceſſant* mortification; to make us auſtere, and ſullen, and averſe from

from all the endearments of ſociety! *True* religion on the contrary, looking up to God as the benevolent Father of the univerſe, is in no fear of provoking his diſpleaſure, either by the improvement of his gifts, or the enjoyment of them: fears only to provoke him by doing nothing, or by doing miſchief; by a life waſted in indolence and inaction, or devoted to the gratification of *private* intereſt and paſſions, in oppoſition to the general welfare.

Another leading principle in the religion of the times was *Enthuſiaſm:* and to theſe two principles, acting with united force, we may impute the ruin both of church and king. If the minds of the people had not been heated by *religious* zeal, they would have yielded up their *civil* liberties after a ſhort and a faint ſtruggle: *Charles* might have eſtabliſhed himſelf in arbitrary power, and the *Star-chamber* have rivalled the *Inquiſition*. But when once men are convinced that they are fighting the cauſe of God, and acting under the immediate influence of his holy ſpirit; from that moment they become irreſiſtible.—Without queſtion Enthuſiaſm is a moſt

a moſt admirable inſtrument, when properly directed, and ſeaſonably checked: but it is an inſtrument, which no *human* wiſdom is capable of guiding. It reſembles ſome of thoſe efficacious *medicines*, which our phyſicians care not to preſcribe; from the difficulty of adjuſting the doſe, and the impoſſibility of foreſeeing whether it will kill or cure. In the caſe before us, the effects of this powerful principle were indeed aſtoniſhing: but they were enough to make wiſe men *tremble*; whenever they diſcern the *ſame ſpirit* diffuſing itſelf through the body of a people. If it reſcued us from the yoke of civil tyranny (which it never effectually did) it left us in a much worſe condition: by ſetting men free from the dominion of reaſon and conſcience, inflaming their paſſions in the purſuit of imaginary objects, and making them an eaſy prey to hypocrites and villains.

Now as Calviniſm, when heated and put in motion by the fervours of this religious madneſs, had been the main cauſe of *overturning* the church (for indeed the overthrow of the *monarchy* was no more than a *ſtep* to the other) it naturally followed, that the

reſtoration

reſtoration of the church muſt prove fatal to the intereſts of this fooliſh and fanatical religion. And indeed the eſtabliſhed clergy exerted their utmoſt force in ſubduing thoſe implacable enemies, from whoſe rage they had ſo ſeverely ſuffered. So that many perhaps may be ready to queſtion whether a religious TOLERATION had any place at all among the benefits of this day. Yet I think it will appear, on a fair examination, that the *ſame* day which put an end to the dominion of ſectaries and fanatics, ſubverted alſo, by its neceſſary conſequences, the tyranny of falſe religion.

Far the greater *part* of theſe ſectaries were *implacable* to thoſe who differed from them; and the Preſbyterian party perhaps *more* implacable than any other. Had *their* church retained its ſuperiority, and preſerved its principles in their original force; our reformation from Popery would have profited us little. For neither was Popery more abſurd in its doctrines, nor more ſevere in its diſcipline, nor in its ſpirit and temper more averſe from toleration, than the religion *then* profeſſed by the main body of the Preſbyterians.

tians. It cannot therefore be doubted, that after the overthrow of the royal party, the terrors of PERSECUTION hang over men's heads—But how, it may be ſaid, could the reſtoration of the *church*, a church (at that time) almoſt *equally* intolerant, and very greatly exaſperated, ſet them *free* from thoſe fears?

It muſt be obſerved then, that the *Preſbyterian* party, notwithſtanding their abhorrence of Popery, agreed with the *Romaniſts* in one of their *worſt* principles, the *independency* of the *church* upon the *ſtate*. If they did not agree in words, they did in practice; as all their hiſtories, the hiſtory of *Scotland* more eſpecially, afford abundant proof.—But now, from the very conſtitution of the *Engliſh* government, the *prelates* are, in a great degree, dependent on the *prince*: and fortunately the princes who were *then* to reign, were no friends to perſecution; *Charles*, becauſe he thought *all* religion a jeſt, and *James*, becauſe by ſhewing indulgence to diſſenters of every denomination, he could indulge *Popery itſelf* with leſs ſcandal. Whatever ſteps therefore were taken in thoſe reigns for

for the ſuppreſſion of ſectaries, were either taken from motives purely *political*, or in compliance with the *zeal* of the people. I know not that the perſecution towards the end of *Charles*'s reign is any exception to what I have here affirmed: for, I think, it was a meaſure dictated by policy and revenge, not by religion. But, if it *be* an exception, it ſtands ſingle. For though many acts of ſeverity are found in the hiſtory of that reign, the prince himſelf was little concerned in them. His conſent was ſometimes *purchaſed*, and ſometimes *extorted*; but ſcarce, on any occaſion, freely given. So that, in this one inſtance, the family on the throne became (as far as they durſt) the patrons of freedom.

It is a circumſtance of ſome curioſity in our Engliſh annals, that a prince ſhould be expelled from a Proteſtant country, for his zeal in ſupporting *liberty of conſcience*. But it was indeed notorious to what this liberty *tended*; and the overthrow of the church, and the re-eſtabliſhment of Popery, the great objects then in view, muſt of neceſſity have ended in the moſt abject ſlavery.—No wonder

der therefore that the friends of liberty were glad to unite, on this preſſing occaſion, with the moſt zealous champions for eccleſiaſtical power. To this union we owe the completion and confirmation of all the benefits we this day commemorate: and a *Calviniſt* Prince concluded, what a *Catholic* Prince had begun, the great work of toleration.—Let us be thankful to the good providence of God, which out of the weakneſs and wickedneſs of mankind can derive the moſt extenſive and valuable bleſſings!

It appears, upon the whole, that the reſtoration of our exiled ſovereign was an event many ways beneficial to this kingdom. That it was *leſs* beneficial, than it *might* have been, was owing perhaps, in a conſiderable degree, to the impatient zeal of his loyal ſubjects; who, like *Mephiboſheth* in the text, were ready to give up ALL, *foraſmuch as their lord the king was come again in peace unto his own houſe*.—I proceed,

II. To obſerve the *folly* they were guilty of, by expreſſing their joy in this extravagant manner.

The civil conſtitution of this kingdom was, as yet, far from perfection; and there was now a fair occaſion of improving and compleating it. For *Charles* might have been reſtored on *any* terms, or under *any* limitations.—Inſtead of this, he came in almoſt *without* conditions. He obtained the moſt unlimited confidence, before he had taken one ſtep to deſerve it: and he lived to acquire as abſolute an authority, as his unhappy father had ever poſſeſſed; he lived to govern without *Parliaments*.

To point out particularly what *might* have been, or *ought* to have been done, on this occaſion, might be an individious taſk; and would far exceed the limits of this diſcourſe. But moſt certainly our anceſtors ſhould not have been content with *leſs* than was actually obtained in a later period: ſhould have *attempted* at leaſt to prevent a return of the calamities they had ſuffered; and to form an eſtabliſhment, which might ſecure them in the moſt effectual manner both from tyranny and faction.—By neglecting to obtain this ſecurity, the men who placed *Charles* on the throne, expoſed both church and ſtate to the utmoſt

utmoſt danger. The returning monarch, void of every religious and every moral principle, was ready to ſacrifice the fate of *Europe* to the caprice or the cunning of a miſtreſs; and ſtudied to ſubvert the liberties of his people, not from any reputable principle of ambition or honour, but that he might, without difficulty and without oppoſition, employ the hands and purſes of his loving ſubjects in miniſtring to his royal pleaſures! It was not indeed long, before his ſubjects were awakened from their dream of happineſs: but it had like to have been too late. Never was the whole machinery of oppoſition put in motion with more art and addreſs, and (to ſay the truth) with leſs reſtraint from principles of juſtice and honour. Yet all this was found too little. *Charles*, though obliged to give way for a time, was able at laſt to ſurmount the utmoſt *efforts* of his enemies: and had either *his* life been prolonged, or had his *ſucceſſor* trodden in the ſame ſteps; the liberties of *Britain* were no more. —— Nor was the eſtabliſhed religion leſs expoſed to ruin than the eſtabliſhed government. The indifference of one brother, and the zeal of the other, were alike fatal to its intereſts;

and the church was in perpetual danger of ſinking, under the unwearied efforts of Popery; an enemy, that well knows how to improve its advantages, and to uſe fraud or force with equal ſucceſs.

But we are not yet at an end of the miſchiefs which flowed from the want of proper care and caution in thoſe who reſtored their exiled ſovereign. His immediate ſucceſſor felt them in their full force. For it ſoon became neceſſary for that deluded monarch to be ſent back into baniſhment: and the prejudices of the people and the circumſtances of the times, concurred in placing WILLIAM, a *ſtranger* and a *ſoldier*, on the throne of *Britain*. Hence a door was opened to innumerable evils; ſome of them remaining to this day, and likely to remain to the lateſt poſterity. Let it be ſufficient to have pointed at theſe evils, without naming them. I mean not to cenſure the preſent times, but the paſt.

But ſince we have hinted at the inconveniences, let us not forget the benefits, ariſing from this change of government: the

improve-

improvement of arts; the extenſion of commerce; the ſteady adminiſtration of juſtice; the free exerciſe of religion. Let us not forget, that we have a prince on the *throne*, who makes it his boaſt, that he is a NATIVE of BRITAIN. May he long continue to reign in the hearts and affections of his ſubjects! may his miniſters ſerve him with fidelity and prudence; and may ſuch ſervice be ever repaid by the confidence and thanks of an united people!

DISCOURSE V.

Preached on Friday December 13, 1776, being the Day appointed by Authority for a General FAST, on Account of the AMERICAN WAR.

ACTS vii. 26. latter Part.

—*Sirs, ye are Brethren; why do you wrong one to another?*

THE tranſaction, here mentioned by St. *Stephen*, is related, without any material variation in the book of *Exodus*.* Both accounts agree in repreſenting the *Iſraelites*, as at *variance* among themſelves:

* Chap ii. 13, 14.

both

both agree that *Moſes*, who was deſtined by God to be their leader and deliverer, endeavoured to bring them back to charity and peace: both agree, that his endeavours proved ineffectual; and particularly that the man who had *done* his neighbour wrong, was moſt averſe to a reconciliation. — In one point the account before us is more exact than the other: it gives us the very words, which *Moſes* employed, in order to heal the diviſions of his unhappy countrymen:

Sirs, ye are BRETHREN; *why do ye wrong one to another?*

They were brethren in more ſenſes than one. Their relation to *Abraham*, their common parent; their common calamity under the preſſure of *Ægyptian* ſervitude; their joint title to the promiſed land; and their ſtill more honourable title to the promiſed *Meſſiah:* all theſe things formed a bond of connection, which ſhould naturally have united them in the firmeſt friendſhip, whether for defence, or conſolation. Yet all this, we ſee, was not ſufficient to prevent them from *ſtriving* againſt each other. The

folly, as well as the miſchief of ſuch ſtrife, is too evident to need further illuſtration.

* *Now all theſe things—are written for our admonition:* let us apply them, as we may, to our own uſe. The ſubject is fruitful; and might give a fair entrance into many of thoſe controverſies, which appear of late to have taken intire poſſeſſion both of our heads and hearts. But I will not debaſe the ſolemnity of the day by engaging in political diſputes. It is *my* duty to lay before you the plain precepts of the Goſpel: † *Love the brotherhood: fear God: honour the king.*

Now the ſame topic, which was employed to reclaim the Jews, may be urged to us Chriſtians with equal force. *We* too are *brethren,* as well as they: ‡ *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt*; § *begotten again unto a lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus from the dead.*

But, beſides the common ties which unite

* 1 Cor. x. 11. † 1 Peter ii. 17.
‡ Rom. viii. 17. § 1 Peter i. 3.

us,

us, as members of the Chriſtian Church, there is ſtill a cloſer, or a more obvious, connection among thoſe who are members of the ſame *civil community*; who are fellow *ſubjects*, as well as fellow *chriſtians*. The different parts of ſuch a community, however ſeparated by diſtance of place, or diſunited by competition of intereſts, either have, or ought to have, one common cauſe. For the life of the *whole* is ſuſtained and ſupported by the mutual action of its ſeveral *parts*: **The eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* If then, inſtead of diſcharging our reſpective duties in ſubſervience to the common good, we fall into cauſeleſs diviſions, and unjuſt reſentments; if we are even led on to repeated acts either of oppreſſion or rebellion; we defeat the very end of human ſociety. The laws of every civil community are the conditions of peace among its members. When thoſe laws are broken, to any conſiderable degree, men relapſe into a ſtate of barbariſm, and become wolves and tygers to each other.

* 1 Cor. xii. 21.

Why

Why then, may we addreſs the leaders of political contention, *why do you wrong* to your *brethren?* why do you forget the united obligations of intereſt, of duty, of natural affection and charity? It is a queſtion which *deſerves* a ſerious anſwer. But it is a queſtion *not* to be anſwered by contending parties. Blinded by prejudice, and heated by paſſion, they ſee nothing but what they *chuſe* to ſee; and ruſh on haſtily to the point in view, regardleſs, or fearleſs, of conſequences. Both ſides make profeſſion, in every civil controverſy, of regard to juſtice and public good: both are too often drawn aſide by private intereſt or private reſentment. —— The *leaders* of faction, even when dreſſed in its moſt ſpecious colours, have uſually much to anſwer for: though many times their deluded *followers* may be objects of pity rather than puniſhment. Even they who are engaged in the beſt cauſe, and muſt be preſumed, in charity, to act with the beſt intentions, can ſeldom preſerve themſelves from being borne away by the torrent, perhaps farther than, in their cooler moments, they would wiſh to have gone.—Far therefore from cenſuring with ſeverity the conduct of others, we may

all

all of us do well to liſten to our Saviour's determination,—**He that is without ſin among you, let him firſt caſt a ſtone.*

Nothing can be more fatal to the repoſe and ſecurity of government than a ſpirit of PARTY. *Divide and govern* was a maxim fit only for *Italian* politicians. In this land of freedom it will ever be received with diſdain. But, if we diſcard the *principle*, the *practice*, I fear, of fomenting diviſions, is at *all* times too common among us; and prevails at *this* time perhaps more than ever. Yet ſure it requires no great ſagacity, to diſcern the innumerable miſchiefs which this dangerous ſpirit brings along with it.

In the firſt place, it diſables men from *judging*, with any tolerable exactneſs, of public meaſures and public characters. Even the ſtrongeſt arguments can ſeldom prevail againſt the logic of the paſſions. The cauſe in which we are engaged we *know* to be right and juſt; and we reject, with ſcorn, every attempt that is made to open our eyes. The

* John viii. 7.

adverſe

adverſe party we *know* to be *wrong*. We know them to be influenced by the moſt corrupt motives, and wiſh them to meet with the moſt exemplary puniſhment. The ſame facts, the ſame characters, when transferred from one party to the other, unaccountably change their complexion and their nature; and deſerve, as it may happen, a ſcaffold or a throne.

Nor is this all. The ſame ſpirit of party which blinds the underſtanding, corrupts the *heart*. Under the influence of this powerful principle, we cheriſh, without perceiving it, the moſt malignant *paſſions*: paſſions altogether inconſiſtent with chriſtian piety and chriſtian charity.—*For where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion* ‡ *and every evil work.*

It is not only that we feel and propagate much uſeleſs diſquiet—The ſpirit of party, and the paſſions which flow from it, give riſe to a variety of inconveniencies and miſchiefs in the whole courſe of our conduct. They break in very frequently on the joys

‡ James iii. 16.

and

and comforts of *private* life: and they ſeldom fail to carry us with irreſiſtible force, if we have but as much *power* as will, into meaſures the moſt inconſiſtent with *public* ſafety.

In *private* life, the zeal we have for our cauſe will not ſuffer a free and friendly intercourſe with thoſe who differ from us. Our ſociety therefore is contracted more than it ought to be; opportunities of information are often loſt; prejudices are heightened, and miſtakes confirmed. But too often, the bitterneſs of party interrupts even the *common* offices of civility and good neighbourhood: and the very motives which ſhould have engaged us to love and amity, ſerve only to animate us againſt our brethren, and provoke a ſtronger reſentment. Even among our *friends* we loſe many enjoyments, and waſte many valuable portions of time, by indulging too far the *ſpirit of patriotiſm*. For that time is *more* than waſted, which is ſpent in railing at our *countrymen and our brethren*.

The miſchiefs in *public* life are ſtill more flagrant. Zeal for a *party*, if not kept under the

the ſtricteſt guard, is enough to eat up every ſeed of virtue, every ſentiment of honour and probity, in the human mind.—Would to God the caſe were not too plain, to need either illuſtration or example!

Nor is it the leaſt evil, ariſing from our party differences, that they unavoidably weaken the hands of government; and, by diſabling thoſe, who alone have the power to protect us, expoſe us, without defence, to our foreign or domeſtic enemies; ſo that we cannot better expreſs our LOYALTY to our *Prince*, than by labouring to unite the minds and hearts of his ſubjects.—*Loyalty*, I know, has, by many among us, been ſtruck out long ſince from the catalogue of virtues. But ſurely this is not ſo *clear* a caſe, as theſe worthy perſons ſeem to apprehend. The words of *ſcripture* at leaſt are expreſs and plain.—* *Honour the king*—† *Let every ſoul be ſubject*—‡ *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man,—to the king, as ſupreme.* I am ſenſible, that the graces of a chriſtian have not, in all men's eyes, the ſame dignity and ſplen-

* 1 Pet. ii. 17. † Rom. xiii. 1.
‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

dour

dour with mere Pagan virtue: yet let not the modeſty of their garb bring them into *contempt* among us. Attachment and fidelity to the *ſupreme authority* are nothing different from attachment to the *public* intereſt, and fidelity to our *country*. For without ſettled *laws* there can be no confidence, there can be no peace, among mankind: and without *government*, laws would be impoſſible. On one hand variety of opinion, on the other diſcordant intereſts and paſſions, would neither ſuffer them to be *made*, nor to be *executed*. Whoever therefore attacks or undermines the ſupreme authority, ſhakes the very foundations of public happineſs. —— Now what can contribute more to weaken this authority, than *diviſions* among ourſelves? What would our worſt enemies more fervently wiſh, than to ſee *that* force, at the ſight of which they have ſo often trembled, employed not upon them, but upon one another?—*It muſt needs be that offences come, but woe to that man, by whom the offence cometh.**

The laſt evil I ſhall mention, ariſing from the ſpirit of party, is IRRELIGION. Here

* Mat. xviii. 7.

indeed

indeed the connection is not quite so evident. But it should be remembered, that *true* religion is seated in the *heart:* and that the very * *end of the commandment is charity.* Nothing then can be more opposite to the spirit of christianity than party-zeal: nor can any thing have a more sure tendency to check the growth of piety and devotion. For † *he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?*

But the same sagacity of modern inquirers, which has done so much to emancipate us from subjection to an earthly sovereign, has gone far also in shaking off the dominion of God himself. His Being has been doubted: his Perfections explained away: his Providence denied: his threats slighted: his written law exposed to contempt and ridicule. Such, it seems, is the wisdom of this discerning age! But it was *not* the wisdom of antiquity. *Their* law-givers, their philosophers, their *patriots*, never once lost sight of the connection between society and religion.—They *knew* the insufficiency of tem-

* 1 Tim. i. 5. † 1 John iv. 20.

poral

poral ſanctions for inforcing obedience to law: they knew the *neceſſity* of obedience, for the ſupport of peace, and even of *freedom*. They were not miſled by the charm of that favourite word, to think ſubjection and ſlavery the ſame thing. — From theſe celebrated ancients men of the greateſt name among ourſelves, in the laſt two centuries, ſeem to have derived their principles of religious policy. It was reſerved for *our own times*, to make the wonderful diſcovery, that we may be good *men* without religion, and good *citizens*, though in open oppoſition to the laws of our country.

In every age, and in every nation, the depravity of our nature appears in innumerable forms, more or leſs deſtructive to the happineſs of mankind: and the whole race of men, without exception, may find abundant cauſe for *humbling* themſelves in the ſight of their Maker. But the ever-ſhifting ſcenes of human life exhibit an infinite *variety* of circumſtances and characters: and, while we *all* wander from the right way, we wander *differently*; every one, almoſt, takes a road of his own. — This is true of *bodies* of men

as well as individuals. Each *nation*, in any aſſignable period, will be found to differ from its neighbours; and each in its turn to differ from itſelf. If one virtue grows, another decays; if one vice is reſtrained, another ſpreads and flouriſhes. I have endeavoured to point out to your obſervation what appear to me to be the principal features of our national character—*Diſſenſion*, *Diſloyalty*, and *Irreligion*. Theſe vices, as we have already ſeen, are naturally *companions*. He who fears God, will honour the king: and he who is ſincerely attached to *either*, far from doing *wrong* to his brethren, will *love* and *ſerve* them; will labour to unite them in the bonds of chriſtian charity.

Yet theſe generous efforts meet with many diſcouragements. Men are never more unwilling to agree, than where their diſagreement is moſt fatal: and it is very obſervable, that they, who have DONE *their neighbours wrong*, are apt to perſiſt moſt obſtinately; and to *thruſt away*,* as St. *Stephen* expreſſes it,

* Acts vii. 27.

thoſe,

thoſe, who labour to bring about a reconciliation. Very remarkable was the anſwer given, in the words following my text, even to the *meekeſt* man upon earth, when he attempted to mediate between his brethren, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?* The words will admit of a very obvious application. But I forbear—It is *our* part to turn our eyes upon *ourſelves*; to reflect on *our own* ſins, whether perſonal or national, with ſhame and concern: and to contribute what we can to a general reformation. It may be little perhaps that *we* can do, in the arduous taſk of reforming our brethren: but let us be careful at leaſt, that we *add* nothing to that load of guilt, which we are unable to remove. And let us particularly guard againſt that dangerous *ſpirit of party*, which is productive of ſo much vice, and ſo much miſery. To many men indeed one ſingle caution might be ſufficient: * *that they ſtudy to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs.* But to thoſe, who have capacity and opportunity to inquire into public meaſures, much more *might* be ſaid, if the time would allow it.

* 1 Theſ. iv. 11.

Permit me only to obſerve in two words, that, in queſtions of ſuch extreme difficulty, you can neither be too *cautious* in forming your judgment, nor too *candid* to thoſe who judge differently. Theſe two maxims, if ſteadily purſued, would cut off almoſt every occaſion, in private life, of political contention.—Let us reflect too, a little more than ſuits with the faſhion of the age, on the honour and duty we owe to our *Sovereign*; nor think it a paradox, that the moſt perfect obedience is inſeparably connected with the moſt perfect liberty.—Laſtly, let the love we bear to our brethren, and the honour we have for our prince, lead us up by degrees to the love and fear of God, by whom * *kings reign, and princes decree juſtice.* Let us ſteadily reſiſt the inroads of Infidelity and Atheiſm: which tear up by the roots *all* the comforts of private life, and ſtrike at the very being of public freedom. If you doubt the truth of this aſſertion, look back into hiſtory. You will there ſee, in a variety of inſtances, that the days of infidelity have been days of tyranny. It cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe.

* Prov. viii. 18.

For

For men, who have caſt off the belief of an over-ruling providence, are no longer, fit to be governed like *freemen*. Laws are not ſtrong enough to reſtrain or to puniſh them: they can only be ruled with the rude and heavy hand of arbitrary power.

May thoſe liberties, on which we ſet ſo high a price, be preſerved inviolate to the lateſt generation! But let us make ourſelves *worthy* of ſo great a bleſſing. United in the bonds of love and charity, in dutiful ſubjection to our governors, and in reverence and gratitude to Almighty God, we may juſtly hope for the protection of heaven. Under that protection we *ſhall dwell ſafely; and ſhall be quiet from fear of evil.** *The Lord ſhall give ſtrength unto his people; the Lord ſhall give his people the bleſſing of* PEACE.†

* Prov. i. 33 † Pſalm xxix. 11.

DISCOURSE VI.

On Church-Authority.

Heb. xiii. 7.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves; for they watch for your ſouls.

OBEDIENCE and authority are reciprocal terms. A right in another to *rule over us*, and a duty in us to *ſubmit ourſelves*, are but one and the ſame thing differently expreſſed.

It has never been doubted, that the authority of which the Apoſtle here ſpeaks, is Church-Authority. This indeed ſufficiently appears from the reaſon aſſigned for our ſubjection.

jection. We are to obey our governors, becauſe they *watch for our ſouls:* a circumſtance which clearly points out Spiritual authority, and diſtinguiſhes it from Civil.

It muſt be owned, however, that in ſaying this we ſay but little: and, if we advance one ſtep farther, we ſhall find ourſelves expoſed to a variety of doubts and queſtions, ſome of conſiderable importance; which the bare words of Scripture will never enable us to reſolve. Even the ableſt critics have waſted their time and pains in this unprofitable ſearch; a ſearch where neither ſkill in languages, nor knowledge of antiquity, could contribute any thing to their ſucceſs.

It is in this inſtance as in many others. Men conſult Scripture for what is not to be found in it; an accurate deſcription of their rights and duties: whereas the knowledge of theſe is ſuppoſed, not taught, by the ſacred writers. There was a time, when men were under the ſame deluſion with regard to their Civil obligations: when both the origin and the form of government, the extent of authority and degree of ſubjection, were determined,

termined, not from the reaſons of things, or the laws of particular nations, but from the precedents and precepts contained in the Bible; a book never intended for ſuch purpoſes, and indeed much injured by the artifice and violence with which it has been preſſed into a foreign ſervice.

It might well have been expected, that the members of the Engliſh Church ſhould have ſeen farther, and judged better: becauſe *this* Church, even from its foundation, has been carefully inſtructed on theſe very points by ſome of its ableſt defenders. But ſo capricious is the public taſte, that theſe great writers have gradually fallen into neglect: their doctrines are now in a manner forgotten; and enthuſiaſts and ſectaries revive the ſame follies, and defend them by the ſame arguments, which were once effectually overthrown. — It may not therefore be improper for us to reſume this beaten ſubject; and try if we can explain, on rational principles, the nature and foundation of Church-Authority. The Sacred Writings, ſo far as they can be pertinently alleged, will be found to confirm, not to oppoſe, the dictates of reaſon.

To

To this end, let us begin with fixing the general idea of a Church; by which I underſtand a number of perſons agreeing to unite in public aſſemblies for the performance of religious duties. — Theſe duties, under moſt forms of religion, will comprehend public *inſtruction* and public *worſhip*.

For the ſake of ſimplicity, I will firſt ſuppoſe the *whole* Church to conſiſt of a *ſingle* congregation: we ſhall afterwards ſee, what difference may ariſe, when *many* congregations become parts of the ſame ſociety.

Give me leave to ſuppoſe farther, that the Civil magiſtrate no way concerns himſelf in theſe religious meetings: we ſhall afterwards ſee what difference may ariſe, when he aſſumes the *ſupremacy* in eccleſiaſtical affairs.

1. We begin then with a ſmall number of men, capable of meeting conveniently for religious purpoſes in one *ſingle congregation*; the magiſtrate neither requiring nor forbidding them to meet, neither directing nor reſtraining them when they are come together.

And

And here the firſt queſtion to be aſked is, why do they meet at all? How will public aſſemblies conduce to the better performance of religious duties?—The anſwer is obvious. By meeting together in a public aſſembly, men are led to perform the offices of Religion, more conſtantly, more properly, and more effectually. More *conſtantly:* becauſe there can be no meetings held without *ſtated times* of meeting: whereas private acts of Religion may be performed at any time, and are therefore at all times in danger of neglect. More *properly:* becauſe each man's peculiar follies will be checked, and his peculiar infirmities relieved, by the united wiſdom of all. And more *effectually:* becauſe public acts of Religion will both make a ſtronger impreſſion on thoſe who partake in them, and at the ſame time afford a teſtimony and an example to other men.

But nothing of all this can be carried into execution, if each particular member of a religious ſociety be allowed to ſpeak and to act in it, *what*, *when*, and *how* he pleaſes. It is therefore highly expedient, if not abſolutely neceſſary, that the offices of Religion ſhould

ſhould be committed to ſome certain perſons, and regulated in ſome certain manner: to what perſons, and in what manner, the ſociety itſelf muſt judge, or muſt appoint others to judge for them.

By the deſignation of particular perſons, many advantages are obtained. *Firſt*, the offices are regularly *performed:* whereas, without ſuch an appointment, they would often be neglected; for ſuch neglect we continually experience in all thoſe inſtances of duty, to which no one man is peculiarly obliged. *Secondly*, they are performed without *competition* or *confuſion*; unavoidable conſequences of unbounded liberty. *Thirdly*, they are much more likely to be performed as they *ought* to be. This at leaſt muſt be true under every form of Religion, that requires attention and ſtudy in thoſe who are to teach it. For every man in ſociety is, or ſhould be, employed in ſome uſeful labour or profeſſion; which muſt engage of courſe his time and his thoughts, and divert him from every other purſuit. Religion then itſelf muſt be made a profeſſion; or no man will be at leiſure to learn and to teach it. Whence

it

it follows, that each ſingle congregation, whilſt unconnected with others, muſt *appoint* for itſelf miniſters of Religion, and *ſupport* this appointment by a voluntary maintenance. For no man will give his time to the public, unleſs excited by public rewards: no man can give his whole time, without expoſing himſelf to want and ruin.

Nor are the perſons only to be appointed for performance of religious duties; but the manner alſo is to be preſcribed. The aſſembly may not unfrequently be deceived in their choice; and the miniſters, if ſubject to no reſtraint, may introduce principles and practices which the people condemn. Or it may happen, than one miniſter ſhall purſue a different plan from another; perhaps a contrary plan: which muſt evidently tend to confound the minds of the people, and weaken the impreſſions of Religion. If the difference be not in form only but in doctrine, the caſe will be ſtill worſe. For nothing is ſo apt to root out all Religion, both from men's heads and hearts, as religious controverſy. A great part of mankind, either from want of capacity or opportunity, are governed by authority more

more than reaſon. What then ſhall they do, when they meet with oppoſite authorities? Or, if they attempt to exerciſe their feeble underſtandings, and to judge for themſelves; how muſt they be embarraſſed by ſpecious and plauſible arguments, alleged with equal confidence on both ſides?—The conſequences are evident. Either they will divide into parties, to the deſtruction of charity; or, unable to determine among different pretenders to truth, they will give up the purſuit as deſperate, and ſurrender themſelves to univerſal ſcepticiſm.

Truth, we are told, can never ſuffer from a free inquiry: the combat perhaps may be ſharp; but ſhe is ſure to conquer in the end. Men are not therefore to be reſtrained from profeſſing their opinions, or from ſupporting them either by their pens or tongues. — All this I am ready to allow: yet ſtill it may be maintained, that *religious aſſemblies* ſhould be carefully guarded from ſuch conteſts: conteſts that defeat the main end for which theſe aſſemblies are appointed, and train up men to ſophiſtry inſtead of Religion.

Here

Here then we have the firſt ſketch of what may be called not improperly *Church-Authority*. For a power in the ſociety of *appointing* its miniſters, implies an *excluſion* of others from the miniſterial office. No man therefore can undertake this office without ſuch appointment, or oppoſe the perſons who are appointed lawfully: unleſs he will ſet his own private will in oppoſition to the will of the whole ſociety; by doing which he renders himſelf incapable of continuing a member. To *declare* this incapacity, is to *excommunicate*.—In like manner, a power in the ſociety of *preſcribing* the forms of its public offices, implies an *excluſion* of every other form. No miniſter therefore can depart in any reſpect from the public inſtitution, much leſs act in contradiction to it, without uſurping a power not committed to him, but reſiding in the body by whom he is authorized and employed. If he does this, he violates the truſt repoſed in him, and ſo renders himſelf unfit to be truſted. The conſequence is, *deprivation* from his office, and from the rewards attending it.

It is not however neceſſary, indeed it is not

not poſſible, that even this ſmall ſociety ſhould all *agree* in every particular determination. The ſmaller part therefore muſt acquieſce in the judgment of the greater; or they muſt form themſelves into a ſeparate congregation.—It is not even neceſſary for all the members to be *aſſembled*; whether for making their regulations, or inforcing them. Inſtead of exerciſing their power *collectively*, they may commit it, if they pleaſe, and as much as they pleaſe, to *repreſentatives*: nay, they may very properly commit the *executive* part of it to a *ſingle* perſon. In ſhort, various forms of government may be aſſigned; any one of which would be ſufficient for the ends propoſed, of appointing miniſters, of preſcribing forms, of inforcing obedience.

2. The conſideration of this ſimple caſe will lead to a ſolution of ſuch as are more complex. Let us go on then to inquire into the nature of religious ſociety, as ſubſiſting among a *number* of *congregations* united into one body.

And here again the main queſtion will be, to what purpoſe ſhould they unite? How will

will the ends of religious aſſemblies be better obtained by an aſſociation among *many*, than if *each* aſſembly had the ſole and ſeparate management of its own concerns?—I anſwer, the benefits of ſociety are the ſame in this inſtance as in others. That is, the ends propoſed will be purſued more wiſely and more uniformly: more *wiſely*, by the advantage of common conſultation; more *uniformly*, by the concurrence of all particular aſſemblies in the reſolutions taken by the whole community.

Thus, for inſtance, in a large and more comprehenſive ſociety, it will be leſs difficult to ſelect *fit perſons* for performing the offices of Religion. In ſingle congregations it muſt often happen, that few or none of the members are competently qualified either to ſerve thoſe offices themſelves, or to chuſe others. But, in a number of congregations, under different circumſtances, and diffuſed perhaps through different parts of an extenſive kingdom, we may both expect a better ſupply of candidates, and a truer judgment of their merits For, though it is not always true, yet it is generally true, even in popular aſſemblies,

blies, that the weak are led by the wiſe.—This however would be arguing on the moſt unfavourable ſuppoſition. For there is no neceſſity that the Miniſters of Religion ſhould be appointed by the people; and much expedience in a different method of appointment. Even ſingle congregations, if they think proper, *may* act by repreſentation; as I before took notice: but a number of congregations, united in one community, *cannot*, without the higheſt inconvenience, act *otherwiſe*. We ſee in *civil* ſocieties, even of the freeſt kind, that, however the people may have reſerved to themſelves the ſupreme legiſlative authority, yet the ordinary adminiſtration of government is committed either to a prince or a ſenate. By a like delegation of power, either ſingle men, or ſmall bodies of men, may and *muſt* be authorized to govern the Church: to them muſt be committed the care of chuſing fit perſons for diſcharging the offices of religion; and from them we may reaſonably expect a much wiſer and ſafer choice, than from the caprice and folly of every particular congregation.

In like manner, and for nearly the ſame reaſons, more ſkill may be expected from a larger ſociety, or from the perſons appointed to govern them, in preſcribing the rules and forms of public religion. One man may ſuggeſt what another overlooks; and the community may profit, in making its reſolutions, both from the variety of materials propoſed to their deliberation, and from the variety of underſtandings employed about them.—Or, if the conſtitution of the Church be ſo framed, as to intruſt even this branch of power to a ſmaller number; then this number, in conſequence of a peculiar deſignation, may well be expected to apply themſelves to the buſineſs more carefully, and more ſucceſsfully.

Even if theſe advantages were leſs than they are, there would not want ſufficient inducement for the union of a number of religious aſſemblies in one community. For it is of the higheſt importance to the intereſts of religion, that it ſhould be conſiſtent and uniform in its outward appearance. Without *uniformity* public inſtitutions can never obtain their full effect. It is eaſy indeed for philoſophical

ſophical men to ſeparate, in their imaginations, mere difference of opinion from every ſort of ill effect that has been apprehended from it. But, in the ordinary courſe of human affairs, doubt and diſcord are the inevitable conſequences of diſſenſion. Either the variety of religious forms ſhakes and ſubverts the belief of all religion; or the warmth of oppoſition, whilſt it kindles men's zeal, ſuppreſſes and ſtifles every other virtue.

On theſe principles the authority of a religious community, both over the miniſters and members of particular congregations, may be ſecurely maintained: whether reſiding in the community at large, or delegated to ſome certain perſons.—Yet ſtill it muſt be obſerved, that a Church thus framed cannot ſupport her power by *civil ſanctions:* ſhe can only take away what ſhe herſelf has given.

And, as no man is obliged to unite with any ſingle congregation, when the forms of its public ſervice appear to him unlawful; ſo every particular congregation is at liberty to remain ſeparate, if unable to join with

any larger community, on ſuch terms as their conſcience allows. Only, in both caſes, men ſhould be careful, not to break the uniformity of public religion, nor to deprive themſelves of the benefit of religious ſociety, on ſlight or fanciful pretences. Nothing leſs than the moſt eſſential intereſts of religion and virtue will juſtify ſuch a ſeparation. But, whenever theſe intereſts appear to require it, men are, becauſe they *muſt* be, abſolutely at liberty; the community having no kind or degree of power over thoſe who care not to continue members of it.

3. One ſubject of inquiry ſtill remains—the alteration that may be produced by the intervention of the *magiſtrate*.—We ſee, by the hiſtory of all ages, that Religion, in the hands of ſelfiſh and factious men, is a very dangerous inſtrument. It therefore greatly concerns the public peace and ſafety, that all Church-Authority ſhould be under the controul of the *civil governor*: that *religious* aſſemblies, as well as others, ſhould be ſubject to his inſpection, and bound by ſuch rules as he ſhall ſee fit to impoſe.

The

The moſt effectual method of obtaining this ſecurity is, to veſt the ſupreme power, Civil and Eccleſiaſtical, in the *ſame perſon*. The church, as we have ſeen, is under no neceſſity of acting *collectively*; but may appoint at diſcretion, either ſingle men, or bodies of men, to frame and execute its laws. There is nothing in the nature of *temporal* power, that renders it unfit to be united with *ſpiritual:* but, on the contrary, much miſchief and danger in keeping theſe two branches of power ſeparate from each other. Why then may not the magiſtrate poſſeſs *both?* Why ſhould not the intereſts of church and ſtate (which are often connected, never oppoſite) be watched by the ſame eye, and guarded by the ſame hand?

There are indeed good reaſons why the *offices* of religion ought not to be adminiſtered by the magiſtrate: both the education of his youth, and the attention of his riper years, have been employed on very different objects; and, amidſt the numberleſs toils and cares of government, it is impoſſible he ſhould find leiſure for any inferior profeſſion.—But, to ſuperintend all profeſſions, and all ranks

of men, for the common good, is itſelf a part of his office: and, by aſſuming the particular care of religion, and the ſupremacy in religious matters, he is enabled to promote the intereſts both of church and ſtate in the moſt effectual manner.

From this ſupremacy of the civil magiſtrate is derived the proviſion of a legal *maintenance* for the Miniſters of Religion. This proviſion is of great importance both to them and the public; as we may eaſily judge from the wretched and precarious condition of thoſe who want it; a condition which ſeldom fails to produce a ſlaviſh dependency, highly unbecoming a public teacher, and in ſome meaſure diſqualifying him for the diſcharge of his office.

And will not the ſame reaſon ſerve peculiarly to recommend thoſe forms of government, in which the Clergy as well as the Laity are diſtributed into different ranks, and enabled to ſupport thoſe ranks in a becoming manner; that both the lower orders may avoid contempt, and the higher obtain diſtinction and regard?—Were *all* the miniſters of religion

gion placed in low ſtations of life, it is eaſy to ſee, with what neglect they would be treated, and with what prejudice their doctrine would be received. Poverty, and aukwardneſs, and ignorance of what is called the *world*, are diſadvantages for which the higheſt attainments in Learning and Virtue could never atone.

But to obtain compleatly the benefits * propoſed from this union of civil and eccleſiaſtical authority, all the members of the ſame commonwealth ſhould be members alſo of the *ſame Church:* variety of ſects having a natural tendency both to weaken the influence of public religion, and to give diſturbance to public peace. Where this is impracticable, not the beſt, but the *largeſt* ſect, will naturally demand the protection of the magiſtrate: and *every* ſect, whoſe principles are not evidently inconſiſtent with good government, will juſtly call for toleration. Protection is due to the firſt, that the advan-

* See theſe benefits deduced at large, and in a very ſuperior manner, by the excellent author of "The "Alliance between Church and State," particularly in B. II. ch. ii.

tages arising from the magistrate's care and favour may be extended as wide as possible: toleration to the last, because the magistrate is equally unqualified and uncommissioned to persecute for conscience sake.

It is scarce needful to observe, that these are only the outlines of church policy; to be filled up in different ways, suited to the infinite varieties of human affairs. — But it may not be improper to obviate an objection, which may seem to strike at the very foundation of the doctrine here advanced. It will be urged, perhaps, that I have considered a church as an institution merely *human*; whereas the *Christian* church derives its authority from God.—This will be readily admitted: but the Divinity of its origin is a circumstance of no moment in the present inquiry. For there is not the least reason to presume, that the Founders of our holy Religion intended it to be governed by any rules, or on any principles, opposite to those which Nature and Reason prescribe. They appointed, indeed, ministers, and offices of religion: it was scarce possible for *any* religion to subsist without them. They established a form of church-

church-government: for the church *muſt* be governed in *ſome* form, or there could be *no* government. But their directions to us are, for the moſt part, very general. Even their example muſt be cautiouſly urged, in different circumſtances. In this one point they are clear and explicit, that authority once *eſtabliſhed* muſt be *obeyed*.

It follows from what has been ſaid, that all ſuch miniſters as accept a public maintenance, and yet refuſe to ſubmit to public authority, are guilty of injuſtice to the civil magiſtrate. Either they ought to acknowledge his power, or to relinquiſh his favour: they can have no claim to *legal* advantages, without obedience to law. And as miniſters, while employed by public authority, are not at liberty to depart from eſtabliſhed forms, or to aſſemble ſeparate congregations; ſo neither are the people at liberty, while they remain in ſociety, to deſert at pleaſure their lawful paſtors, and flock in crowds to receive inſtruction from thoſe who have no authority to give it. If they cannot lawfully comply with the terms of communion, let them make an *open* ſeparation: let them not profeſs to con-

continue members of a church, which they conſcientiouſly diſobey. In vain do men unite in civil or religious communities, if each individual is to retain intire liberty of judging and acting for himſelf. It is a liberty which defeats every poſſible good effect that ſuch union might produce; by ſubſtituting the caprice and folly of every diſordered imagination to the uniform obſervance of rules and laws, ſettled on deliberated advice, and inforced by lawful authority.

We need not look far for examples of theſe irregularities. Unfortunately the parties concerned are moſt of them out of the reach of rational conviction. They who appeal to their ſenſes, inſtead of their underſtandings, are only to be pitied, not confuted.

There is however *one* claſs of men, to whom this plea for compaſſion will not extend: thoſe I mean, who, without any pretence to Inſpiration, live in open war with the national church; with that very church, of which they profeſs themſelves miniſters, and whoſe *wages* they continue to take, though in actual *ſervice* againſt her. Whether this conduct

conduct proceed from a diſlike to *all* eſtabliſhments, or from a deſire of erecting a *new* one, on the ruins of that which ſubſiſts at preſent: in either caſe, it is contrary to the moſt evident principles of Juſtice and Honour.

Much of theſe miſchiefs proceeds from the want of *rational* conceptions concerning God and Religion. A Religion founded on Reaſon willingly ſubmits to human Authority in all points not *eſſential* to the cauſe of Piety and Virtue. But Enthuſiaſm and Superſtition are of a different complexion. Fond of every childiſh conceit, they ſcruple not to ſacrifice the peace of nations to the ſlighteſt toys of a diſtempered fancy. To ſupport, or to oppoſe, an unintelligible doctrine; to retain, or to reject, an inſignificant ceremony; is thought by many an object of ſuch infinite concern, that no earthly good muſt ſtand in competition with it. — Not ſo the Founder of our holy Religion; who has plainly taught us to diſtinguiſh between things of much and of little importance. Not ſo the beſt Philoſophy; which has drawn the *real* objects of controverſy within a narrow compaſs. Not ſo the dictates of Common Senſe; which will ever

ever teach us to accept the benefits of Society on *practicable* terms, and to be content with much leſs than perfection.—No human inſtitution is free from faults: none therefore is ſecure from the attacks of a willing adverſary. But the very worſt Eſtabliſhment that ever exiſted, is better than, what theſe men *ſeem* to covet, a ſtate of Anarchy and Confuſion.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII.

On the ſame Subject.

1 PETER ii. 13.

Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.

THE occaſion of theſe words, as appears from the following verſes, was the reluctance with which the Jewiſh Converts ſubmitted to the Roman Government; ariſing moſt probably from the wrong conceptions they had entertained of the kingdom of Chriſt. It was neceſſary, on many accounts, to correct theſe falſe notions; which had an evident tendency to diſgrace a new religion, and obſtruct its ſucceſs in the world. The Apoſtle,

Apoſtle, therefore, exhorts his followers to ſubmit themſelves *for the Lord's ſake*; from the regard they owed to *Jeſus*, the author of their faith, and the zeal they ought to have for its propagation.

But, though the words were written with this particular view, the precept itſelf is general. It ſuits all times, and all places. For ſubjection to authority is the invariable duty of a Chriſtian. Had the Apoſtles been ſilent, it would ſtill have been a duty. The example and the precepts of our bleſſed Lord will not ſuffer us to entertain a doubt upon this head.

Nor is there any reaſon to confine the words of the Apoſtle to that one branch of authority which gave occaſion to them. We are to ſubmit to *every* ordinance of man; eccleſiaſtical, as well as civil. The reaſon is the ſame in all. We cannot better expreſs our duty to God, than by ſubmiſſion to the ordinances of man.

It is true indeed, we muſt judge for ourſelves, to *what perſons* we are bound to ſubmit.

mit. It was neither reaſonable, nor poſſible, for a *Chriſtian* church to receive its laws and ordinances from a *Heathen* emperor. He might be, as he was, the head of the *national* religion: but he had no right to preſcribe to thoſe, who *ſeparated* themſelves from it. Theſe laſt were to be ſubject to him in civil affairs only: in matters of religion they had other guides, to whoſe authority they were bound to ſubmit.

Yet even theſe guides, when ſupernatural direction was withdrawn, were *ordained of men*. And when, in proceſs of time, civil and eccleſiaſtical power came to be united in the ſame Supreme Magiſtrate; to that Magiſtrate, and to all that had authority under him, it became the duty of chriſtians *to ſubmit themſelves*.

In this caſe, as in many others, Revelation only inforces the principles of reaſon. For the benefits of ſociety cannot be obtained, unleſs each perſon ſubmit his private opinion to public authority: and we know therefore with certainty, that the ſame God, who made us ſocial beings, wills us to diſcharge this moſt

eſſential

eſſential duty of ſociety. If this be evident in regard to civil authority, it will hold equally good of eccleſiaſtical. Religion cannot ſubſiſt in the world without public inſtitutions of religion; nor theſe without public authority. Not only times and places muſt be appointed, but perſons alſo are to be ſelected, and forms preſcribed, for public teaching and public worſhip. So that Church-Authority, if extending no farther than this, is founded on principles of nature and reaſon, as well as confirmed by revelation. But the particular *manner* in which this authority is to be conſtituted; whether it is to be veſted in ſingle men, or in bodies of men, or in general aſſemblies: theſe are points left to human prudence; and liable, amidſt the changes of human affairs, to perpetual variation. In all ordinary caſes, it is the duty of a churchman, as well as of a citizen, to ſubmit quietly to *the powers that be:* not to indulge himſelf in a fruitleſs, perhaps hurtful inquiry, how they *might* have been more wiſely conſtituted. Defects in the conſtitution, whether in church or ſtate, will not juſtify diſobedience. We can then only be releaſed from ſubjection, when we ſee and feel,

feel, that the abuſe of authority deſtroys the very end for which it was given. Till this extreme caſe happen, both miniſters and people, in either ſociety, will find their reſpective duties very plainly marked out.

I. It ſhould never be forgotten by miniſters, that they are ſubject to higher authority. They are to execute law, not to make it. They are to embrace every occaſion of doing good, within the limits preſcribed them: without thoſe limits they can do no good. For no accidental advantage can ſtand in competition with the main end of all government, the ſupport and eſtabliſhment of ſettled rules.

The truth of this in *civil* affairs few men will diſpute. Even *they* will be glad to preſerve the appearance of law, who break through the ſubſtance of it without remorſe. But the miniſters of *religion* have often been leſs ſcrupulous: either as ſuppoſing themſelves veſted with an authority above law; or limited in their obedience to human law by the dictates of religion; or, what is worſt of all, inſpired by heaven to trample both law and reaſon under their feet.

1. The clergy, it has been ſaid (and it has been ſaid by Proteſtants as well as Catholics) derive their commiſſion not from man but God; to whoſe immutable decrees all human power muſt bend. It has been ſaid by men who profeſs the greateſt abhorrence of Popery, that the *church* is independent on the *ſtate*; I might have ſaid, ſuperior to it. Nay, if we liſten to ſome, who have called themſelves miniſters of the reformed religion, we ſhall find their pretenſions ſcarce leſs arrogant, than thoſe of *Rome* itſelf. Princes, it ſeems, and ſenates, are employed in meaner offices, and ought to receive laws from them, not to preſcribe! This miſtake, whether popiſh or proteſtant, has been both frequent and fatal: and has brought infinite diſcredit on the cauſe of religion. It ſhould have been conſidered, that, in every proper ſenſe of the words, the miniſters of the ſtate, as well as thoſe of the church, receive their commiſſion from God. It is doubtleſs agreeable to his will, that civil, as well as religious offices ſhould be properly diſcharged; and it is evidently impoſſible, they ſhould be diſcharged as they ought, if not directed by authority. But in

both

both caſes equally, the perſons who preſcribe, as well as thoſe who execute the laws, are of human appointment. Whatever authority is employed in the ſervice of religion, whether ſubordinate or ſupreme, may without any preſumption be referred to God; from whom all juſt power is derived. But the actual exerciſe of it by particular men is founded only on conſent; and, whatever part of it is delegated to inferior miniſters, is conveyed to them by the act of their ſuperiors, and conveyed only in ſuch form and manner as the law has appointed. If they go one ſtep therefore beyond this, they act without any authority at all, either from God or man.

2. Nor is there more weight in the ſecond pretence alleged, *viz.* that the obedience we owe to human governors may, and muſt be, limited by the dictates of religion. For, if we are not at liberty to *execute* the truſt repoſed in us, we are ſurely at liberty to *lay it down:* and it is a crime, not a duty, to perſiſt in an employment, which we find ourſelves unable to diſcharge, without break-

ing through the moſt ſolemn engagements, and trampling on the rights of ſociety.

3. In anſwer to the laſt plea alleged, I have only to lament the infirmity of human nature. It is to no purpoſe to apply to men's reaſon, when they are governed by ſomething ſtronger than reaſon. One thing is certain, that the influence of enthuſiaſm has ever been fatal to all regular governments.

It is the duty then of miniſters * in an *eſtabliſhed* church, to conform ſtrictly to the rules preſcribed them. It is their duty in *our own* church to conform to her liturgy and articles: both of which are preſcribed, by unqueſtionable authority. Her liturgy is *to us* the rule of public worſhip; her articles, with her catechiſm, the rule of public inſtruction.

I begin with the liturgy; in which doubtleſs there are ſome things to be found, capable of amendment; though, upon the whole, we may think it very lawful, both to uſe it,

* It is equally their duty in a *tolerated* church, when they have once engaged themſelves.

and

and to ſubſcribe to it. Certainly we are to uſe *no other:* we can neither add nor take away, without diſobedience to authority. The faults imputed to our public ſervice are ſome of them indeed of ſuch a nature, as to admit of no alteration. In theſe inſtances we muſt renounce our faith, before we can conſent to reform our worſhip; to reform it, I mean, in the only way which can ſtop the complaints of its adverſaries. As for other objections, they are many of them fanciful and fooliſh; moſt of them againſt things of little conſequence to the main ends of Chriſtian worſhip. The few faults that deſerve any degree of attention, are compenſated by great virtues: and the *general* tendency of our prayers and praiſes is to inſpire our hearts with piety to God, and charity to man. If you allow all this to be true, and yet cannot in conſcience ſubmit to the forms preſcribed, you are evidently diſqualified for the office of a miniſter; and that not only in the *Engliſh* church, but in *all* churches. For no faultleſs church ever ſubſiſted ſince the days of the Apoſtles; and no ſuch church ever will ſubſiſt, till the conſummation of all things.

But, if you ſhould maintain, that the liturgy of our church is wholly undeſerving of the character here given it: if you think it irreligious and unchriſtian, and likely to defeat, rather than promote, the ends it was deſigned to ſerve; on theſe principles, I will not deny that you may continue a miniſter: but not ſurely in the *church* you *condemn*; it can never be a fair and an honourable part to remain in a ſociety, and ſhare the benefits of it, without obedience to its governors. All that can be done, in ſuch circumſtances, is to ſeparate yourſelf altogether; and exerciſe your function, if you are allowed to exerciſe it, in ſome better and more Chriſtian church.

Nor are we more at liberty in our public *inſtructions* to ſet up private opinion in oppoſition to authority: though we have here indeed a larger field, and more is truſted to our own diſcretion. For I conceive we are not obliged, in our diſcourſes from the pulpit, either to explain or defend *every* particular doctrine ſet forth in the articles of religion: and, it ſeems, we are allowed, not required, to read the homilies of the church, inſtead of our own private compoſitions: eſpecially as

as thoſe homilies are recommended to us with a peculiar reference to the *times* in which they were written. But we are far from being at liberty to ſay all we pleaſe. Every word that comes from our mouths in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed faith, is a violation of the moſt ſolemn engagements, and an act of diſobedience to lawful authority.

Here again it will be urged by ſome perſons, "We are to obey God rather than man. "A Chriſtian miniſter is to preach the Goſ-"pel of *Chriſt*, not to inculcate the doctrines "of a *national church*; and it is his duty alſo "to preach the *whole* Goſpel; not to confine "himſelf to ſuch parts of it, as he finds to "conſiſt with human creeds and articles." But how, I aſk, did it *become* his duty? He was once at liberty to chuſe for himſelf, whether he would preach any part of the Goſpel: what is it, that now binds him to preach the whole of it? Certainly they who *made* him a preacher impoſed no ſuch obligation. They neither required, nor authoriſed him to preach any other doctrine than is agreeable to the inſtitutions of the eſtabliſhed church.

Should it be ſuppoſed, that the doctrines of a national church are notoriouſly falſe and impious; ſhould they appear deſtructive to the cauſe of religion and virtue: it will then indeed be the duty of a miniſter, as of every other man, to ſet himſelf in oppoſition to ſuch doctrines. But he muſt firſt ceaſe to be a miniſter; I mean, in that ſociety where ſuch corruptions prevail. He cannot in honour accept employments and rewards from the ſame church, which he is determined to oppoſe. If he will act either conſiſtently or honeſtly, he muſt reſign his office, or obey his ſuperiors.

I am far from wiſhing to diſcourage the clergy of the eſtabliſhed church from thinking for themſelves, or from ſpeaking what they think: not even from writing, where the importance of the occaſion may ſeem to demand it, and where no weightier reaſon forbids it. I ſay nothing againſt the right of private judgment: againſt freedom of thought, or freedom of ſpeech. I only contend that men ought not to attack the church from thoſe very pulpits, in which they were placed for her defence: and leſs than this

can

can never be admitted, without leaving Chriſtian congregations to the caprice of every ſingle man, and expoſing them to perpetual doubt and diſcord, without all hope of relief.

Are theſe principles unfavourable to liberty? To legal liberty they certainly are not: to anarchy on the one hand, and tyranny on the other, they ſtand in profeſſed oppoſition. To live without government, belongs only to ſavages: to be governed by will, is the condition of ſlaves. The freeſt of men are thoſe who live by ſettled rules, under the influence of authority prudently conſtituted, and temperately uſed. The national church claims not more than this: and I am much miſtaken, if even our diſſenting congregations, they who profeſs to reject all human ordinances, will ever be content with leſs.

II. The ſame principles from which we have deduced the obligations of miniſters, will equally ſerve to eſtabliſh the duties of the people; their duty whilſt they continue members

members of a national church, and the cauſes which will juſtify a ſeparation from it.

1. Whilſt they continue members, they are to be conſtant in their attendance on thoſe religious ordinances, which the laws of their country have provided for them; and to attend them with ſerioufneſs and devotion. They are not obliged to ſubmit implicitly to the inſtructions of their teachers; for human teachers may err. But they are to hear attentively, and to weigh impartially; and to ſuffer the arguments and exhortations, which are offered them, in the cauſe of piety and virtue, to make a deep and a laſting impreſſion.

On the other hand, nothing can be more repugnant to the very nature and end of a Chriſtian church, than to invade the province of regular miniſters, and to intrude uncalled into the ſacred offices of religion. The legal deſignation of particular perſons to theſe offices cannot but mean, if it means any thing, that all who are not appointed are excluded. For the liberty of praying and preaching, according to the impulſe of each man's

man's private fancy, is the very evil, and ſurely it is an evil, which Church-Authority was deſigned to cure.

2. But it may be, you will ſay, as it was formerly, that the national church is impious and idolatrous. And are Chriſtians to aſſiſt at the rights of Paganiſm? are Proteſtants to join in the ſacrifice of the maſs, in the worſhip of images, in a blind ſubjection to the decrees of the Pope? Nothing, I hope, has been ſaid; nothing, I am ſure, was meant, which can warrant this concluſion. When theſe extreme caſes happen, we are to obey the Evangelical precept, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her ſins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* Rev. xviii. 4.

But where no ſuch pretence can be alleged with any ſhadow of reaſon; where nothing is practiſed diſhonourable to God, and nothing is taught injurious to man; nothing which can make us bad parents, bad friends, bad citizens: I muſt have leave to doubt whether ſmaller improprieties, or even unimportant miſtakes, will juſtify a ſeparation.

Reli-

Religious diviſions have produced much miſchief in the world, and are likely to produce much more. But ſubmiſſion to an eſtabliſhment, where the eſſential parts of religion are ſecured, can produce none at all; or none but what is infinitely outweighed by the beneficial conſequences of public order, and public peace.

Every man is ſenſible, in his temporal concerns, how neceſſary it is for him to ſubmit to the opinion of others. The laws perhaps are neither made nor adminiſtered according to his private opinion; yet he chuſes to abide by them, rather than to want their protection. Where now is the difference in our ſpiritual affairs? It has been ſaid, "that we "are to worſhip God in the beſt manner we "can; and that every individual, in deter-"mining for himſelf, muſt take private con-"ſcience for his guide." Had this maxim been applied only to private and perſonal religion, no man would have queſtioned the truth of it. But to ſocial religion it is altogether inapplicable. If numbers are to join in the ſame form of worſhip, few, if any of them,

them, can worſhip God according to their own ideas of perfection. They who contend moſt warmly for religious liberty, one would think, of all men ſhould be moſt ready to acknowledge the unavoidable varieties of human opinion: and, ſo long as opinions differ, it will be impoſſible for every man, or even for any man in every inſtance, to follow his own. All we can do, is to join in communion with thoſe who differ from us leaſt; and to make it poſſible, by mutual conceſſions, to unite in the ſame religious offices: which very conceſſions are ſo many deviations from what each party takes to be beſt. It cannot then be a reaſon for diſſenting from a national church, that many things, as appears to us, may be changed for the better: ſince this reaſon will extend much too far, and baniſh us at once from all the churches in the world.

Yet even this pretence is more ſpecious than the original ground of diſſent from the ceremonies and the diſcipline of the Engliſh church; a ground, as it ſeems, not yet relinquiſhed by diſſenters, though perhaps not very conſiſtently maintained. It has long been

been held among them, that ſcripture only is the rule and the teſt of all religious ordinances; and that human authority is to be altogether excluded. Their anceſtors, I believe, would have been not a little embarraſſed with their own maxim, if they had not poſſeſſed a ſingular talent of ſeeing every thing in ſcripture, which they had a mind to ſee. Almoſt every ſect could find there its own peculiar form of church-government: and while they inforced only their own imaginations, they believed themſelves to be executing the decrees of heaven. But the preſent race of men, who diſſent from us, will hardly maintain that the rules they obſerve, whether in the choice of miniſters, or the diſcharge of miniſterial duties, are preſcribed to them by divine authority. Why then do they reject human? why rather do they admit it in one form, and reject it in another? Their miniſters are ſubject, and they muſt be ſubject, to the particular congregations, by whom they are employed; perhaps to an aſſociation of ſeveral. Why not to the community at large? why not to that ſovereign authority which is intruſted with the common

mon concerns of the whole nation?—It will readily be allowed, that, in the kingdom of Chriſt, Chriſt himſelf is the ſole lawgiver, and the ſole judge. But what connection is there between the inviſible kingdom of Chriſt, and the outward form of a national church? The laws of His kingdom are no other than the conditions he himſelf has preſcribed of pardon and ſalvation. No human power can repeal or change them: no human wiſdom can apply and inforce them. But the laws of the national church are quite of another kind: rules of expedience only, preſcribed by our governors, for the public adminiſtration of the offices of religion. They who ſubmit to theſe rules with a good conſcience, and they who ſeparate themſelves for conſcience-ſake, may equally be members of Chriſt's ſpiritual kingdom, and heirs of eternal happineſs. It is only maintained here, that they who depart from rules for no other reaſon than becauſe they are preſcribed by authority, act on a principle inconſiſtent with the very being of ſociety, either eccleſiaſtical or civil.

May we all of us be careful to discharge our respective duties, to the honour of God, the increase of true religion, and the salvation of our own souls! and may we never want the assistance of God's holy spirit to strengthen and support our weak endeavours!

DIS-

DISCOURSE VIII.

On the DIFFICULTIES which attend the STUDY of RELIGION.

ISAIAH xlv. 15.

Verily thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf, thou God of Iſrael the Saviour.

NOTHING is more precarious than the ways in which men uſually judge concerning the *fitneſs* of divine diſpenſations: and there cannot be a more remarkable inſtance of this raſh judgment, than an opinion, which we hear delivered every day, that religion muſt of *neceſſity* be ſomething *plain* and *eaſy*.—If we would condeſcend to take notice of obvious facts, inſtead of amuſing our-

ſelves with deductions of argument, we ſhould ſoon ſee that religious truths, even of the moſt important kind, are very frequently wrapped up in obſcurity; we ſhould ſee that the Lord of the Univerſe does not obtrude himſelf upon our view, but expects, that we ſhould trace out his being and perfections by ſlow, and cautious, and patient ſteps; that his *moral* perfections, in particular, are *environed* with difficulties, the ways of his *providence*, to *us*, inexplicable, and the proſpects of *futurity*, to far the *greater* part of mankind, dim and uncertain. *Righteouſneſs* indeed *and judgment are the habitation of his throne:* but *clouds and darkneſs are round about him.**

If this be, as it ſeems to be, plain matter of fact, all reaſonings to the contrary muſt be deceitful. And, to *prove* it fact, I appeal to the experience of all ages. Not only *Heathen*, but *Chriſtian*, philoſophers have loſt themſelves in endleſs mazes of error, while engaged in the purſuit of the moſt ſublime truths. How much leſs can the bulk of

* Pſalm xcvii. 2.

man-

mankind pretend to arrive at clear and certain concluſions; ignorant as they are in the principles of reaſon, and unpractiſed in the uſe of it?

1. But this method of appealing to *fact* is not acceptable to the pride of philoſophy. Religion, we are told, was deſigned for *all*. It is *every* man's concern to know his *God:* and therefore *no* man, even the moſt ignorant and ſavage, can be at a loſs to diſcover him. The great laws of nature cannot but be obvious to all mankind: for *all* are bound to *obſerve* them, at their peril. Nor could the rewards of futurity be properly diſtributed, or the puniſhment juſtly inflicted, without giving timely notice to the parties concerned, that they may clearly underſtand, *before* they act, the *conſequences* of their own actions.

This *may* be, for I will not diſpute it, *human wiſdom*. But it is not *divine wiſdom*. God has *not* been pleaſed to give this clear and full knowledge to the ſons of men. Some few perhaps, who lived in the moſt enlightened ages of the world, *may* have attained

to it by the uſe of their reaſon. Many more have received it from the authority of tradition; or have been led to it by the influence of eſtabliſhed laws: and *all*, we will ſay, who bear the name of *Chriſtians*, have derived this moſt important acquiſition from the Goſpel of their Lord and Saviour.—But how ſlight, how uncertain, how mixed with error, is all that knowledge of which we make our boaſt? and how large a portion among the inhabitants of this globe ſtill remain *in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death?* * Search among the wandering tribes of *America*; or ſearch, if you pleaſe, thoſe fruitful ſeminaries, which ſupply us annually with *men*, to do the work of *horſes* and *oxen:* and try, if you can collect, in all thoſe vaſt regions, that plain, that eaſy ſyſtem of religion, deſigned for the uſe of *all mankind*. Is it *their* fault, that the ways of heaven, the wiſdom and the goodneſs of a gracious Creator, are in a great degree hid from their eyes? Or ſhall we preſume to ſay, that, with God, as well as man, their *features* and their *complexions* deprive theſe unhappy beings of the common rights

* Luke i. 79.

of

of humanity? We *will* not ſay it. We dare not think it.—We have only to ſay, that, if they who *have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law*, they *are a law unto themſelves*:* and, as is plainly implied in our Saviour's words, that *to whom* little *is given, of him ſhall* little *be required*. †

2. But what, you will reply, is all this to *Chriſtians?* to thoſe, who ſee by a clear and ſtrong light the diſpenſations of God to mankind? We are *not as thoſe which have no hope*. ‡ *The Day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us*: the ſpirit of God *ſhall lead* us *into all truth*. §

To this deluſive dream of human folly, founded only on miſtaken interpretations of Scripture; I anſwer in one word, Open your Bibles. Take the firſt page, that occurs in either Teſtament, and tell me without diſguiſe; is there *nothing* in it too hard for your underſtanding? If you find all before you *clear* and *eaſy*, you may thank God for giving *you* a privilege, which he has denied to many

* Rom. ii. 14. † Luke xii. 48.
‡ 1 Theſ. iv. 13. § Luke i. 78.

thouſands of ſincere believers. —— But they who *confeſs their ignorance*, and who (I preſume to ſay) are the *better*, as well as the greater part, can only have recourſe to that favourite maxim, That at leaſt all *neceſſary* things are plain: a maxim, it may be ſaid, which has been uniformly maintained by all Proteſtant churches: a maxim expreſſly aſſerted by the church of *England:* a maxim which is the very ground and baſis of our reformation from Popery.

Now to the *words* of this maxim I have nothing to object: nor to the *ſenſe* in which it was long underſtood, whether by communities or private perſons, in their conteſts with the church of *Rome.* Scripture, they ſay, and we heartily join with them in ſaying, is *of itſelf* ſufficient to our ſalvation. We want no infallible interpreter. We have no reverence for the impure fountain of human tradition. He who reads his Bible, and *endeavours* to underſtand it; and not to underſtand it only, but to *live* according to it, is in a ſafe way to eternal happineſs.

But

But from this true principle a moſt falſe and dangerous concluſion has often been drawn: I mean, that it is matter of *indifference* to one who believes the Goſpel, whether he underſtand *much* or *little*. Becauſe neither the meaneſt capacity, nor the moſt unfavourable ſituation of life, will ſhut men out entirely from the benefits of the Goſpel, it is inſtantly concluded, that *all* of us are at liberty, whatever abilities or opportunities we poſſeſs, to forbear the more difficult parts of Chriſtian knowledge: they are matter, it ſeems, of *curioſity*, not of *duty!* —This, as it appears to me, is a moſt fatal deception. I will therefore examine the matter ſomewhat more particularly. It is ſuppoſed, if I miſtake not, by the perſons of whom I ſpeak, that the doctrines of Chriſtianity are to be thrown into two *claſſes*, the one *neceſſary*, the other *unneceſſary*: that doctrines of the *firſt* claſs are ſo plainly taught in Scripture, that *no* ſincere Chriſtian can poſſibly miſtake them: whereas doctrines of the *ſecond* claſs, not being of equal importance, are often left expoſed to doubts and difficulties, which, without attention and penetration, are not to be removed.—Now this

this diſtinction, on which ſo much ſtreſs is laid, I maintain to be altogether chimerical: as being evidently grounded on this abſurd ſuppoſition, that the *ſame* parts of Scripture muſt be eaſy, or difficult, to *every reader*, Whereas ſome things are eaſy to one perſon, ſome to another: to one, *more* is intelligible, to another *leſs*: and hardly *any* thing is plain to *all*. By what rule then ſhall the ſeparation be made? It is *our* buſineſs to underſtand the *whole* word of God, as well as we can: not to pick and chuſe, what we will ſtudy, and what we will forbear. Some parts, it is true, may be more important than others (of which however *we* are very fallible judges) but *nothing* contained in the New Teſtament is inſignificant to *any* man; and I am not ſure, that any *one* point is neceſſary to *all* men.

Were there any real foundation for ſuch a diſtinction, we might long ſince have expected to ſee an exact *catalogue* of theſe plain and neceſſary doctrines. But no ſuch catalogue has yet been produced, or is like to be produced hereafter. Some indeed have conceived, that all neceſſary points are comprehended in the *Apoſtle's Creed*. But is there not

not rather *more* in that Creed, than is level to the capacity of *every* Chriſtian? Is there not *leſs* than may juſtly be demanded from perſons of improved abilities, and of leiſure and opportunity for the ſtudy of religion?—Others again, ſenſible of this objection, have reduced the neceſſary articles to *one—That Jeſus Chriſt was a true Prophet.* But what now, if he, who admits the authority of *Chriſt*, ſhould equally admit the authority of *Mahomet?* What, if he ſhould miſtake, or deny, every doctrine of Chriſtianity? What, if he ſhould reject thoſe ſacred books, either as interpolated or ſpurious, which alone are able to make him wiſe unto ſalvation. The bare act of believing in *Jeſus* has the appearance at leaſt of *inſignificance*, rather than neceſſity, unleſs we receive his inſtructions, and be obedient to his laws. Surely we may affirm without heſitation, that *ſuch* faith ſhall profit us nothing. But how much *farther* we are to go; what doctrines are of *neceſſity* to be believed; what may be overlooked by us, without *harm* or *danger:* are queſtions to which no *general* anſwer can poſſibly be given. I have only to repeat, that we are to do what we *can*. The more we ſtudy, the better we under-

underſtand, the ſcriptures; the more delight, the more profit, we ſhall receive from them. —After *all* our endeavours, we can but hope to attain to a very obſcure and imperfect view of the wiſdom of God in the redemption of mankind. So long as we continue in *this* life, *divine things* are to be apprehended by *faith*, not by *ſight*. We only diſcern them *through a glaſs darkly:* and ſhall not be admitted to a full participation of them, till we paſs from a ſtate of trial to a ſtate of glory.

3. But, in making this concluſion, we ſhall be ſtopped perhaps by another of thoſe fooliſh diſtinctions, which either the pride, or the indolence, of our nature is perpetually ſuggeſting to us: the diſtinction, I mean, between *ſpeculative* doctrines and *practical*. It is readily allowed us, that matters of pure *ſpeculation* are involved in doubt and difficulty: but, in matters of *practice*, every thing is ſuppoſed to be plain and open.—As if the great truths of the Goſpel had been meant only for our amuſement; and had never been intended either for the improvement of our minds, or the direction of our conduct! As if it were poſſible to extract from the Bible,

or

or indeed from any other book, a ſyſtem of *morals*, which is not built and founded on true principles of *Philoſophy!* on what are called *ſpeculative* opinions concerning God and ourſelves!—Theſe are wild and groundleſs conceits. *Every* part, without exception, of the Chriſtian revelation was deſigned for our improvement in piety and virtue. Empty and *barren* ſpeculations have no place at all in thoſe divine books.

4. But you mean perhaps to diſtinguiſh between *doctrines* and *laws*. You mean to aſſert, that the difficulties of religion are confined to the *doctrinal* part only; while the *precepts* are delivered with a plainneſs and perſpicuity, fitted to the uſes, and level to the capacities, of all mankind.

If this were admitted, it might ſeem a little unfortunate, that revelation ſhould be plain on thoſe ſubjects *only*, where it is *leaſt wanted*. The *moral nature*, which God has given to all men, and their daily *experience* of the good or ill effects of human actions, can ſeldom be ſuppoſed to leave them *quite* ignorant of the rules of their duty. If they have not

not *reaſon* for their guide, yet they are not left without a faithful monitor, which, in many inſtances, ſupplies the *place* of reaſon. But they have *no* inſtinct in their nature, which points out to them the doctrine of *ſalvation through Chriſt:* and yet *this* doctrine is delivered to them in the moſt dark and myſterious terms. Whilſt the *laws* of God are, in ſome degree at leaſt, marked out, by *nature*, as well as revelation; the *ſanctions* of thoſe laws, to which nature *cannot* conduct us, appear to have a cloud *purpoſely* thrown over them, in the very book which *profeſſes* to reveal them.

But is it *true*, after all, that even the *moral* precepts of the Goſpel are free from every degree of difficulty and obſcurity? I doubt not: I fear, this cannot be aſſerted, without great want of *charity* to ſome of the earlieſt and brighteſt ornaments of the Chriſtian church. Even in the pureſt ages of antiquity, many of our Saviour's own diſcourſes were totally perverted and miſunderſtood: and Popiſh *morality* had almoſt obtained its full growth and maturity, whilſt Popiſh *faith* was only juſt ſtruggling for birth. We cannot

not ſuſpect the *ſincerity* of thoſe good men, who were ever ready to ſuffer and to die for the religion they profeſſed. We cannot ſuſpect the *capacity* of *many* among them; who appear to have been equal in learning to the firſt men of their time. We are therefore unavoidably led to conclude, that the paſſages of ſcripture, which *they* unfortunately miſapprehended, were (at leaſt in *thoſe* times) *hard to be underſtood:* and if they are eaſier to *us*, it is perhaps reaſon, not revelation, which has ſerved to explain them.

To ſum up all in few words, it was plainly not *intended* by the Author of our beings to give us clear, or full, or certain, information on the ſubject of religion. He has deſignedly thrown a veil over his own works, both of nature and grace. Without the help of application and ſtudy, we ſhall underſtand neither the one nor the other; even *with* thoſe helps, we ſhall underſtand them very imperfectly; and, in what we *do* underſtand, we ſhall never arrive at certainty: never, I mean, till we are placed in another, and a higher, ſcene of things. There, and there only, ſhall our doubts be fully cleared; and we *ſhall know*

know God *even as alſo we are known.** In *this* life moſt aſſuredly we have no ſuch knowledge to expect. It has pleaſed God, for wiſe and good purpoſes no doubt, to reveal himſelf to us *in part* † only. *What* thoſe purpoſes were, I preſume not to ſay. What conduct *we* are to purſue, may more ſafely be preſcribed. It is *our* duty to improve *every* diſpenſation of providence to our advancement in piety and virtue. If we do this, we are ſure to comply with the benevolent intentions of our Creator. The difficulties, to which we are expoſed in the purſuit of religious knowlege, will have produced *ſome* part at leaſt of the good intended by them, if they make us better men and better Chriſtians.

And ſurely theſe very difficulties afford admirable leſſons of *humility* and *charity* to *every* rank and order of men: and to thoſe, who, by their profeſſion, ought to be *teachers* of religion, a moſt powerful excitement to the *ſtudy* of it.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
† Ibid. ver. 9.

1. When

1. When we reflect as we ought on the obſcurity and imperfection of all human wiſdom, we ſhall be led to think *humbly* of ourſelves. It is not for *us*, who ſee ſo little, either to aſſert confidently, or to contend obſtinately. Conſcious of our own weakneſs, we ſhould be ever open to information and conviction: ever willing to improve ourſelves in *true* wiſdom, without regarding, by what *hand* it is offered. And,

If we thus readily ſurrender our own opinions even to *human* teachers; much more ſhall we give up our whole hearts and minds to the information, which is tendered us in the word of *God*. When once we are convinced of its divine authority, we ſhall ſubmit to it without reſerve. Inſtead of wreſting and torturing it, as is often done, to make it ſuit with our own preconceived notions; we ſhall *correct* thoſe notions by the ſurer and more authentic information, which we receive from ſcripture, and never think ourſelves too wiſe to be *taught of God*.

2. The ſame ſenſe of difficulty which makes us humble, will make us *charitable*

too

too. While we labour to reform *our own* notions, we ſhall not be forward to condemn *others* for the miſtakes we *think* we ſee in *their* ſyſtems of religion. *All* of us are liable to miſtakes: and God only knows, *where* the fault lies; or whether indeed there be *any* fault either in us or them. They who ſee and feel their own weakneſs, will readily give the ſame indulgence to others, which they hope to find for themſelves. Thus much may be collected from the obſcurity of our religious knowledge, for the benefit of *every* Chriſtian. But,

3. To thoſe who profeſs themſelves *teachers* of religion, ſomething more remains to be ſaid. Religion, we ſee, is difficult: but ſtill it is *important*. It is our duty therefore, and our intereſt, to *ſearch the ſcriptures daily*, that we may come to the *full* knowledge of all that God has ſeen fit to reveal to us. The *greater* part of mankind are precluded from this ſearch by the very condition of their being. It is our's to lay open the ſources of heavenly inſtruction, and diſtribute them pure and unmixed to the reſt of the world. Neither indolence nor ambition will afford us

any

any reaſonable pretence for neglecting this great duty. The education which has been given us, the opportunities we enjoy, the ſacred truſt we have taken upon us, lay us under the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt obligations, of applying ourſelves diligently and impartially to the ſtudy of divine truth. — Think it not then enough to go through the common offices of the church, with propriety and decency: but devote yourſelves as much as poſſible, turn your whole thoughts and care, to the ſtudy of Chriſtianity. You will find employment enough for *years* of ſtudy; you will live and *die*, conſcious of your own *ignorance:* but you will die with this comfortable reflection, that you have done your *duty*.

DISCOURSE IX.

On SALVATION through FAITH in CHRIST.

EPH. ii. 8. former Part.

For by grace are ye ſaved through faith—.

IT is the faſhion of the age, in which we live, to treat this Scripture-doctrine with ſcorn and contempt. Men of fine parts, improved by converſation with the world, can perceive, it ſeems, at firſt glimpſe, without the fatigue of a painful inquiry, that there is no merit in *believing*, no danger in *diſbelieving*.—I am not addreſſing myſelf to theſe enlightened ſpirits: but, I truſt, to plain, ſober men; who are ever willing to liſten to reaſon, and to follow wherever ſhe leads.

Reaſon

Reaſon ſurely will tell us, that, when it has pleaſed God to reveal himſelf to us by the mouth of his Son, it cannot be ſafe, or even decent, to ſhut our ears againſt the heavenly voice, and turn our back on this divine Inſtructor!

But we ſhall be told, perhaps, that *no* ſuch inſtruction has ever been given: or, if it *have*, that it contains nothing *new*; nothing, but what wiſe and diſcerning men could eaſily have diſcovered for themſelves. Whatever is *more* than this ought to be imputed, it ſeems, to bigotry and ſuperſtition. Either the books which contain ſuch doctrines are not genuine: or the paſſages, from which they are taken, have been interpolated; or they are wrong tranſlated; or perhaps only miſinterpreted, or miſapplied. By ſome or other of theſe artifices every *peculiar* doctrine of Chriſtianity is eaſily evaded: and it may ſeem of little importance, to admit, or reject, a religion, which is ſuppoſed to contain *nothing*, but what we know already.

But neither is the *ſuppoſition* true, nor the *concluſion* juſtly drawn. It is not *true*, that

our religion contains nothing new. The Bible is a *treaſure* of knowledge to every attentive and impartial reader. It is *weakly argued*, that, *becauſe* the doctrines of religion are conformable to reaſon, therefore reaſon alone is a full and ſufficient guide. The experience of *ages* has long ſince detected the fallacy of this argument.——Let us ſee then how this ſubject will appear, when ſeen in a juſter point of view.

It *may*, I preſume, be true, that God has revealed his paſt and future diſpenſations towards man in an extraordinary manner. It *muſt* be true, that, if he has ſpoken to us *at all*, he requires us to *attend* to what he ſays. It *muſt* be true, that he ſays nothing trifling, nothing ſuperfluous; nothing, in ſhort, but what, in ſome way or other, it concerns us to know.——Are we *quite* ſure then, that we act like wiſe men, when we reject the doctrine propoſed to us, without *inquiry?* or, which is the ſame thing, without a *ſerious*, and *careful* inquiry?—Again,

If we admit the *exiſtence* of a revelation from God, it *may* be true, that the *books*, which

which contain it, require to be ſtudied with *care*. It *may* be true, that our *firſt* care ſhould be employed, in guarding againſt the influence of our prejudices and paſſions. It *muſt* be true, that the word of God is neither to be *accommodated* to our *preconceived* opinions (thoſe very opinions perhaps, which it was meant to reform) nor *confined* within the ſphere of *natural* knowledge, which it was deſigned to extend and enlarge.

Theſe, we will allow, are only *poſſibilities*. But it is the part of prudence, to guard even againſt poſſible evils. How then ſhall we be juſtified, either in *neglecting* the Scriptures, or in *abuſing* them? either in *ſlighting* and *overlooking* the inſtructions contained in them, or in *eluding* and *perverting* theſe very inſtructions, leſt we ſhould find ſomething in them which we care not to know?

Conſider well the *conſequences* of either ſuppoſition. — You have inquired, we will ſay, carefully and honeſtly: and you find after all, that the faith of a Chriſtian has no reaſonable foundation. Why then you have loſt, yet not *wholly* loſt, your time and your

pains. You have at leaſt the ſatisfaction of knowing, that you have no *neglect* to anſwer for, either to God or yourſelves. — But, if on the other hand, the revelation which you reject, after a ſlight, perhaps, and ſuperficial inquiry, ſhould appear to *be*, what it *pretends* to be, the voice of God ſpeaking to man; on *this* ſuppoſition, what have you not to fear? The Scriptures have pointed out to us no other road to heaven, but *faith in Chriſt*. It is the *natural* means, it is the *appointed* means, of Chriſtian ſalvation.

It is the avowed deſign of Chriſtianity, to *ſave* us from *ſin*: from the guilt, and from the puniſhment of ſin. From the *guilt* we are ſaved by repentance and reformation: from the *puniſhment* we are ſaved by that all-ſufficient ſacrifice which has been offered for us upon the croſs. Now *faith* is the *natural* means of bringing us to *repentance*: it is the *appointed* means, by which we partake in the Chriſtian ſacrifice.

1. Faith is the *natural* means of ſaving us from a life of ſin, and converting us to a life of piety and virtue. For what, but the hopes and fears of futurity, will enable us to ſubdue our

our corrupt affections? to reſiſt, at once, the allurements of pleaſure, and the attacks of pain? and even to face death itſelf, when *duty* calls us to it, with ſteadineſs and courage? Will conſcience, will honour, will intereſt, do this? Certainly not. Theſe will be found ſo many broken reeds, which will yield us no ſupport when we moſt want it.

For what is CONSCIENCE without *religion*? A *name* only and a ſhadow.—Far be it from *me*, to diſpute the reality of a *moral* principle in the human heart. I *feel* its exiſtence: I clearly diſcern its uſe and importance. But in no reſpect is it *more* important, than as it ſuggeſts the idea of a *moral Governor*. Let this idea be once effaced, and the principle of conſcience will ſoon be found weak and ineffectual. Its influence on men's conduct has, indeed, been *too much* under-valued by ſome philoſophical inquirers. But be that influence, while it laſts, more or leſs; it is not a *ſteady* and *permanent* principle of action. Unhappily we always have it in our power to lay it *aſleep*. We can do this, without any extraordinary effort. *Neglect* alone will ſuppreſs and ſtifle it; and bring it almoſt into a ſtate

a ſtate of ſtupefaction. Nor can any thing, leſs than the *terrors* of religion, awaken our minds from this dangerous and deadly ſleep. Theſe may ſtrike the moſt hardened ſinner, if he is but ſincere in his *belief* of religion. It can never be matter of indifference to a *thinking* man, whether he is to be happy or miſerable beyond the grave.

HONOUR too is a ſentiment eaſily extinguiſhed in the human mind. Inſtances are not wanting in the higher, as well as lower, ranks of ſociety of men, who are not only without *conſcience*, but without *ſhame*.—— This however is not the whole of the matter. Were the principle of honour as laſting as it is powerful, ſtill it would afford a lame and inſufficient ſupport to virtue. For, the object of this paſſion being nothing more than the breath of an undiſcerning multitude, it continually engages us in the moſt variable and uncertain courſes; often in direct oppoſition to the eternal rules of right and wrong. Nay, in ſome caſes, there is an eſtabliſhed *ſyſtem* of honour, which ſanctifies the moſt flagrant vices; ſuch as pride, and cruelty, and revenge. — Here then we have no ſolid ground

ground for an uniformly right and virtuous conduct.

Shall we tread more ſecurely in the purſuits of INTEREST? — Intereſt, it may be ſaid, when rightly underſtood, is only to be promoted by a regular courſe of virtue. It is purely from miſtake and miſapprehenſion, that men purſue it by baſe and diſhonourable means. All the errors in their conduct proceed from *miſcomputing* their true intereſt. —But will not this *always* be the caſe? We cannot reaſonably expect, that the generality of mankind will ever compute *better*, than they do, and have done. Is it ſafe then to truſt them to a guide, by which they have been ſo often, and ſo fatally, miſled?—Perhaps too caſes might be produced, in which ſuch computations are *not* erroneous. It may, and does, happen, in ſome inſtances, that our moſt important intereſts in *this* world cannot be purſued ſucceſsfully without deſerting our duty. Frequently, men ſeem to *gain*, not to *loſe*, by tranſgreſſing the rules of morality. Nor is the attention they pay to their intereſt ever eſteemed a meaſure of their *virtue*. On the contrary, an *intereſted* man,

man, and a *diſhoneſt* man, are ſuppoſed to be names of the ſame perſon. — Here then we ſhall find no ſecurity. It is not a *temporal*, but an *eternal*, intereſt, that will keep us firm and ſteady in the diſcharge of our duty.

But to ſome perſons perhaps all this may appear foreign from the purpoſe. For the doctrine, they will ſay, of a *life to come*, is a doctrine of *natural* religion; and can never therefore be properly alleged to ſhew the importance of *revelation*. They judge perhaps from the frame of the world, that the preſent ſyſtem is *imperfect*. They ſee deſigns in it, not yet *compleated*; and they think they have grounds for expecting *another* ſtate; in which theſe deſigns ſhall be *farther* carried on, and brought to a *concluſion*, worthy of infinite wiſdom. I am not concerned to diſpute the *juſtneſs* of this reaſoning. Nor do I wiſh to diſpute it. But how far will it reach? Will it lead us to the *Chriſtian* doctrine of a judgment to come? Will it give us the proſpect of an *eternity* of happineſs? Nothing of all this. It ſhews us only, that *death* is not the end of our beings: that we are likely to paſs hereafter into other ſyſtems,

more

more favourable than the preſent to the great ends of God's providence, the *virtue* and the *happineſs* of his intelligent creatures—But into *what* ſyſtems we are to be removed; what new ſcenes are to be preſented to us, either of pleaſure or pain; what new parts we ſhall have to act, and to what trials and temptations we may yet be expoſed: on all theſe ſubjects we know juſt nothing. That our happineſs *for ever* depends on our conduct *here*, is a moſt important propoſition; which we learn *only* from *revelation*. This it is, which inſeparably unites our intereſt and our duty. This only can enable us to bear up againſt the ſtorms of adverſity. This only can make power, and wealth, and pleaſure, appear contemptible things.

But this is not all. The inſufficiency of our philoſophical ſpeculations, for keeping us ſteady in a courſe of virtue, appears ſtill farther from the great *uncertainty* of human *opinion*: I mean, when formed on any other bottom than *experience* only. Even the wiſeſt of men, when they attempt to penetrate into the nature and laws of their future exiſtence, can riſe no higher, than to ſome probable

probable conjectures: and will *conjectures*, think you, of futurity have force enough to overbear the preſſing importunity of near and ſenſible objects? Will pride, and ambition, and intereſt, all give way on the appearance of ſuch *ſhadowy* hopes and fears? It cannot be. There is *no* principle in *nature*, which will effectually draw us off from the purſuit of *worldly* objects. It is *faith* only, which enables us to *overcome* the world.

Should we even *admit*, that the powers of reaſon may conduct a few thinking and ſpeculative men to the moſt enlarged and affecting views of their future exiſtence: yet what is this to the *bulk* of mankind? *They* muſt be ſaved by *faith*, if they are ſaved *at all*: either by faith in Jeſus, or, as it may happen, in *Jupiter* and *Apollo*. Either they muſt believe the ſound doctrine contained in the holy ſcriptures, or they muſt believe every vain and idle tradition, which has been handed down to them by their anceſtors. And will any man, at this time of day, ſeriouſly maintain, that the mythology either of ancient or modern Paganiſm is juſt as well calculated, as the goſpel of Chriſt, to regulate the ſentiments,

ments, and purify the manners of mankind?

From this slight sketch may easily be collected, that, *without faith it is impossible* (the Apostle only means extremely *difficult*) *to please God*;* in other words, to discharge those duties, which alone can render us objects of divine approbation. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

2. I now proceed to shew, that faith is the *appointed* means of saving us from the *punishment* of sin—I must premise however, that the penalty of *original* sin is remitted absolutely and unconditionally. Death was inflicted on all for one man's disobedience: and by one man's obedience, life is restored to all. They who ‡ *had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, were made subject to death: and they, who have no share in the *righteousness*, *which is of faith*, shall yet partake with the children and servants of Christ in one common resurrection.

* Heb. xi. 6. ‡ Rom. v. 14. vi. 30.

But

But, while in this ſenſe we contend for the univerſality of redemption, in *another* ſenſe we deny it. The remiſſion of *actual* ſin is not, like the other, tendered to *all*. Neither *unbelieving*, nor *unrepenting*, ſinners, ſhall ever enter the kingdom of God. The words of ſcripture, on this important ſubject, are too plain to be eluded. We are told of it again and again in the ſtrongeſt terms. They who refuſed to acknowledge our Saviour's miſſion are deſcribed by him as offenders of the higheſt claſs. Hypocrites and Infidels are to have one common *portion**. Nay the moſt ſhocking and unnatural crimes are repreſented, we may ſay, in a *favourable* light, when compared with the yet more *enormous* crime of rejecting the goſpel §. The neceſſary connexion between faith and ſalvation is ſtrongly implied in the words of my text. In many other places it is clearly *expreſſed*: and particularly in that very remarkable declaration from the mouth of Chriſt himſelf, *He that believeth—ſhall be ſaved: he that believeth not, ſhall be damned* ‖.—Let thoſe who think it a matter of ſmall importance, whe-

* Matt. xxiv. 51. Luke xii. 46. § Matt. x. 15.
‖ Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 18, 36.

ther

ther the religion of Jesus be true or false, attend well to the force of these expressions, and *tremble* at the consequences of their own neglect.

There is indeed a difficulty on this subject, which must not be passed over. If remission of sins, it may be said, is confined to *believers*, what shall become of those, who lived *before* the time of Christ, and had no warning given them of his appearance in the world? what of those, in every age and nation, to whom the offers of mercy have never been made?—I cannot be of *their* opinion, who speak of this as an inquiry in which we have *no concern:* for it is the concern of every Christian to vindicate his religion from the imputation of cruelty and injustice. To guard therefore against such imputations, it has been supposed by many, that the *general* expressions, which we meet with, on this head, in the New Testament, are to be *limited* by the case and circumstances of each particular person; for that *no* one is tied to *impossibilities*.—*Every* good man, I believe, is inclined, at first hearing, to favour this supposition. But, I fear, it is a supposition not always to be recon-

reconciled with the obvious deſign and intention of the ſacred writers. According to St. *Paul*, every one ſhall be ſaved, that *calls* upon the name of the Lord. But *how*, ſays he, *ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how ſhall they believe, unleſs they hear?* * The paſſage plainly implies, that they who have never *heard* of Chriſt cannot be *ſaved:* ſo that they are deprived of ſalvation for want of that very faith, which it was *impoſſible* for them to have.—It may be ſaid indeed, the Apoſtle means nothing more, than to repreſent the *difficulty* men muſt be under of qualifying themſelves for heaven and happineſs; when they have no guide to direct their ſteps, or even to point out to their view the object and end of their labours. But I am not ſure that we can follow this interpretation, without taking an unwarrantable liberty with the plain words of Scriptures Perhaps too it may be found *not neceſſary*, to the vindication of religion, that this liberty ſhould be taken. For we may well allow, that our Saviour has made a *general* propitiation for the ſins of the whole

* Rom. x. 14.

world;

world; and yet maintain that he has provided a *peculiar* ſalvation for his diſciples and followers. In the repreſentation indeed, which he has given us, of the judgment at the laſt day,* we find the whole race of mankind diſtributed only into two claſſes; the *righteous* and the *wicked*. But we are *not* told, that *all* the righteous ſhall obtain the *ſame* reward. God is gracious and kind to *all* his creatures, who have rendered themſelves *capable* of his favour: but he may yet be *more* kind to thoſe, who come recommended to him under the ſpecial patronage of their *Redeemer*. For *his* merits, not their *own*, they may be advanced to a higher ſtation, and raiſed to more diſtinguiſhed honours. *Life eternal*, we will ſay, is purchaſed for *all*, who are qualified to receive it, by the blood of Chriſt. But *Chriſtian ſalvation* is confined to his *choſen* flock; to that *peculiar people*, whom he has *purified for himſelf*, and made heirs of *a better reſurrection*.

I ſee nothing in this plan contrary to the rules of juſtice. It is perfectly *conformable*

* Mat. xxv. 31.

to the methods God is pleaſed to purſue in the government of the *preſent* world: and perfectly well adapted, ſo far as *we* can judge, to the ſupport of piety and virtue. The rewards, it is true, of our *Saviour*'s perfect obedience are transferred to *us*, who have no claim to them. But they are ſtill *his* rewards, not *our*'s: for he is graciouſly pleaſed to conſider the favours and diſtinctions conferred on his faithful *followers*, as conferred on *himſelf*.

Let us not however be too peremtory in deciding on the ways of God. Believers ſhall be ſaved: unbelievers ſhall be damned. This is Scripture, and *therefore* true. But *all* believers ſhall *not* be ſaved: *the devils themſelves believe and tremble*.* This alſo is Scripture: and Scripture cannot contradict itſelf. May it not then be ſuppoſed, without inconſiſtency, that *all unbelievers* ſhall not be *damned?* though this indeed the Scripture has *not* expreſſly told us. If we take that word in its *ſevereſt* ſenſe, the propoſition *muſt* admit of ſome limitation. Otherwiſe

* James ii. 19.

we

we ſubvert the moſt fundamental doctrines both of natural and revealed religion. *Criminal* unbelief will be juſtly puniſhed. Unbelief *not* criminal *may* draw puniſhment after it, if it gives occaſion, as it naturally will, to an abandoned and profligate courſe of life. But farther than this we cannot go. *For, when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature, the things contained in the law, theſe, having not the law, are a law unto themſelves.** And, when they who are ſtrangers to the Goſpel of Chriſt fulfil the *precepts* of the Goſpel, they will doubtleſs, in ſome degree, be intitled to its privileges, and ſhare in its rewards. — We preſume not however to *affirm*, that they will be placed on a level with *Chriſtians*; nor yet to *deny* it. On this point, the Scriptures are not *explicit*, and we muſt content ourſelves therefore with ſuch reaſonable conjectures, as, by comparing and laying together different paſſages, we may be able to form.

May *we*, ſo conſider theſe things, that they may inſpire us with reverence for God's holy

* Rom. ii. 14.

word; with a lively ſenſe of the obligations we are under, to hear and obey it; and with a firm reſolution to amend our lives, and *walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith we are called!*

CHARGES

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY of the ARCHDEACONRY of WINCHESTER.

CHARGE I.

On the CHARACTER and CONDUCT of a MINISTER of the GOSPEL.

Delivered at the ARCHDEACON's Primary Viſitation, in the YEAR 1760.

Reverend BRETHREN,

IT is ſome abatement of the pleaſure which I have in meeting you, and which I aſſure myſelf will increaſe on a longer acquaintance, that I am obliged to aſſume the office of a Teacher: and this on points in which I am conſcious I want information, and before perſons who ought to give, not to receive it. The experience you have had, in the care of your reſpective pariſhes, muſt needs

have furniſhed you with means of informing yourſelves, which *my* ſituation in life has never afforded me. —— Allow me however, in compliance with the eſtabliſhed cuſtom, to lay before you ſuch reflections as have occured to me, not on your *parochial duties*, but your *general conduct*.

Every Clergyman is, to a conſiderable degree, maſter of his own time: and the uſe to which he thinks fit to apply it will be one of the firſt teſts both of his prudence and his virtue. — On this head, there are two oppoſite errors to be avoided: love of letters may make us unſociable; love of ſociety may make us illiterate. And if either of theſe inclinations be carried to ſuch exceſs as to extinguiſh the other; it will not only diſqualify us from doing the good we might do, but will in ſome meaſure defeat its own end. Learning can never be ſucceſsfully purſued, if we have no communication with other men; and the pleaſures of ſociety will be very imperfectly enjoyed, if we ſpend no time in the improvement of our own minds. To underſtand well either books or men, we muſt *ſtudy* both: and we muſt *underſtand* both,

both, in a competent degree, or we ſhall make a right uſe of neither.—It may be proper then to inquire, how theſe different views ſhould be carried on? how we may derive from each the greateſt advantage to ourſelves, and to others?

1. I begin with the purſuit of letters: on which ſubject I fear it will not be unſeaſonable, to obſerve, *That* HUMAN *learning is to be purſued by us as well as divine.* My reaſon is (for I will mention only *one* reaſon) becauſe the neglect of the firſt will render our ſucceſs in the laſt *impoſſible.* —If I carried this obſervation no farther than to the ſtudy of languages, I might perhaps be ſecure from contradiction.—But in truth this is the leaſt and loweſt object of my concern. Hiſtory, philoſophy (natural as well as moral) even oratory and poetry, *all* deſerve our regard; though either inequality, or diverſity, of talents may make it expedient for particular perſons to purſue ſome one in preference to the reſt. Whatever ſtudy extends and ſtrengthens the faculties of the mind; whatever furniſhes us with juſt principles of reaſoning; whatever unfolds to us the ſecret

ſprings

ſprings of human paſſions and human conduct; whatever leads us to a more perfect knowledge of the ways and the works of God; cannot but be a moſt important preparation for the ſtudy of religion. I have expreſſed myſelf, with regard to ſome of theſe particulars, perhaps improperly: for to ſtudy nature is to ſtudy God himſelf, the Author of nature; it is rather a part of religious knowledge, than a preparation for it. The ſupreme Being cannot be the immediate object of our inquiries. We can ſee him no otherwiſe, than in his word, and his works: and we ſhall ſtudy his word to little purpoſe, if our minds are not filled with thoſe awful ſentiments of his power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs, which his works only can inſpire.

I expreſſed my fears, that this obſervation above-made may not be altogether *unſeaſonable*. I meant to ſay, that religion is actually in *danger* of ſuffering from the neglect of it; of degenerating into Enthuſiaſm and folly. By applying themſelves abruptly to ſacred learning, without the neceſſary aids of human reaſon, men have been engaged in the moſt vain and fruitleſs reſearches; have learned to

to pronounce confidently and uncharitably on points not intelligible, or not useful, or not capable of any rational determination; and to treat with contempt the most *essential* parts of religion. After much labour and profound meditation, they have been able to find, in the word of God, every thing but, what they *should* find, an authentic rule of faith and manners.—A proper cultivation of the understanding would have made it impossible for that whimsical mixture of vain philosophy and unintelligible divinity, which has been propagated of late years with so much warmth and vehemence, ever to enter the minds of men.——It is not, that this system, absurdly called *Mosaical*, contains false and hurtful doctrines.—It is a sufficient misfortune, that it contains nothing: that it leads men to an unhappy waste of time and thought: that it teaches them to corrupt the simplicity, and debase the dignity of religion, by childish etymologies and trifling allegories: that it engages them in all the rancour of theological hatred, not in defence of laws or doctrines, but of empty and unmeaning sounds.

Another

Another inſtance that may be mentioned, of a like nature is the growth of that modern ſect of *Puritans*, who to all the nonſenſe of a Calviniſtical creed (which they ſeem to poſſeſs in common with the perſons laſt mentioned) have added (what I hope is peculiar to themſelves) the chimerical claim to *Inſpiration*.—When weak and ignorant mortals have once preſumed to boaſt of an intimate commerce with the Deity, it is even dreadful to think, to what extremes they may be carried of folly and fanaticiſm.—If this contagion has found no entrance *here*; it is ſaid however to be at our *doors*, and it highly concerns us to guard againſt it.

I have in ſome meaſure anticipated, what I meant to have propoſed as a *diſtinct* obſervation from the firſt—*That even in the purſuit of* RELIGIOUS *knowledge we ſhould conſtantly attend to the principles of nature and reaſon*.* —If we forget theſe, we ſhall be ſubject to continual deluſion in the interpretation and the uſe of Scripture itſelf.

* See this ſubject farther explained in Charge IV.

I would

I would not be misunderstood on this subject —least of all would I be thought to tread in *their* steps, whose pretended zeal for the immutable law of nature serves them only for a convenient disguise, whilst they make their attacks on Christian revelation. But it is one thing to employ true knowledge as a handmaid to religion: it is another, and a very different, thing to divest religion of her authority, and set up a spurious philosophy on her throne. Let reason be used to determine the sense of Scripture, not to oppose its dictates. There will still remain a large and extensive province, in which the aids of human learning may be employed with advantage and safety.

It may be thought however, and I think it has been said, that the only branches of knowledge which can be listed in this service, are grammar, and criticism, and philosophy. But surely this assertion is not well founded. For, in the more difficult parts of Scripture, it is often of great use for fixing the sense, to consider, what sense is most reasonable; most worthy of the supreme Being; most agreeable to what is already known of his character and

and conduct.—That this method of inquiry *may* be purſued improperly cannot be denied: and, I add, there is peculiar *danger* of this impropriety, in men whoſe underſtandings are unfortified by habit, and unprovided of the principles of knowledge. But then it cannot without abſurdity be intirely rejected: and it is hard to ſay, whether there be greater inconvenience in too literal, or too licentious, an interpretation of Scripture. We are not, moſt certainly, to pervert the doctrines of the Goſpel, in order to accommodate them to our own conceits. But then it frequently happens, that a haſty and ignorant reader ſees a doctrine in his Bible, which is not there: content perhaps with the firſt ſenſe which offers, purely becauſe he has not judgement enough to entertain a doubt.—— And indeed the main uſe I would make of natural reaſon in collecting the ſenſe of revelation is, that which a thinking man can ſcarce fail to make of it, that we may often be brought under a neceſſity of ſuſpending our determination, and inquiring more carefully before we fix our opinion.

I cannot

I cannot better illuſtrate the point for which I am contending, than by calling to your remembrance the abſurdities into which men have fallen in interpreting St. *Paul's* Epiſtles. — Men perhaps deſtitute of no accompliſhment, which might qualify them for the office of interpreters, except that one which is of more importance than all the reſt, good ſenſe. — But when once this taſk was undertaken by a philoſopher; by a man of large views and improved underſtanding (though much inferior in erudition to thoſe who had gone before him) with what admirable ſucceſs was it performed? In ſpight of the moſt inveterate prejudices, I may ſay of the whole Chriſtian church (divided only by attachment to *oppoſite* errors) the cauſe of truth prevailed and triumphed. Few, I ſuppoſe, among us entertain the leaſt doubt, that the Apoſtle's reaſoning has been beſt explained by him who beſt underſtood the nature of reaſon itſelf.

I have but one obſervation more to make on this head. It is only *That we ſhould purſue knowledge of* EVERY *kind in ſubordination to* PRACTICE. I mean, we ſhould proportion

tion the degree of our attention to the importance of the ſubjects on which we are engaged; and try to derive advantage, even from thoſe which are leaſt important, by making them ſubſervient to the uſes of life.—Indeed he who is employed in the acquiſition of true ſcience cannot be altogether miſemployed. Though the prize in view be of little value, the purſuit at leaſt may be uſeful. Yet ſurely ſome difference is to be made between thoſe parts of knowledge which gratify our curioſity, and thoſe which ſerve to the direction of our conduct; between thoſe ſtudies which terminate in private amuſement, and thoſe which contribute to the happineſs of mankind.

In nothing is this diſtinction more apparent than in the ſtudy of theology. Survey, if you pleaſe, all the bulky volumes, which aſſume to themſelves this venerable name; and how ſmall a proportion will you find, even in the beſt of them, which tends to make us wiſer and better men?—Yet all the reſt, if we would ſpeak in the moſt *favourable* terms, can have no higher title than the *amuſements* of *divines*. We ſee in the books of

& eccleſiaſtical hiſtory (we ſcarce need to go farther than the hiſtory of the *Council of Trent*) the folly and frivolouſneſs of thoſe controverſies, which have ſo often diſturbed the peace of the Chriſtian church. We ſee that many of them were abſolutely without meaning; many more without uſe; almoſt none of any conſiderable influence on life and manners.—Men cannot be content with that general information, which God has ſeen fit to convey, and which alone is of real importance; but muſt needs determine, or pretend to determine, what they evidently want faculties to comprehend. And when they have vainly ſpent their time and labour in unprofitable diſquiſitions; they require a blind aſſent from others to the deciſions they make, which, right or wrong, are foreign to all the purpoſes of human life. Nothing can be more hurtful to true religion, than the improper ſtreſs which has often been laid upon *faith*; not in ſubſervience to virtue, but in diſtinction from it: nothing can be more repugnant to the whole tenour of Scripture, than the conduct of thoſe, who treat *morality* with contempt; and in a manner exclude from their religious ſyſtem the very

end of the commandment, the very *perfection* of evangelical righteouſneſs. — Think not I mean to ſpeak lightly of the faith of a Chriſtian ;* it is *our hope and defence, the Rock of our ſalvation.* But ſurely a man may arrive at true faith, without wandering in the mazes of the ſchools. He may find perhaps a ſhorter and a ſurer road ; and he will have no cauſe to fear that he believes too little, if he believes enough to make him repent and obey. — If we are firmly perſuaded that Jeſus was ſent from God ; if we are ſincerely deſirous to obſerve his laws, and hope for ſalvation in and through him : it will never be laid to our charge, that we have miſconceived certain metephyſical niceties, which have been drawn from obſcure paſſages of Scripture by the magical operation of Pagan philoſophy.

But let us now paſs from books to men. Let us conſider, what conduct, in our intercourſe with others, will beſt promote the ends of ſocial life, and moſt adorn the character we bear.

* See, on the contrary, Diſcourſe IX. and many other parts of this volume.

II. It would be uſeleſs and impertinent, before this audience, to mention the harm and danger of an unbecoming intimacy with men of looſe principles and profligate manners. Much leſs ſhall I need to inſiſt on the miſchief we might do and the ſcandal we might bring on religion by *partaking in other men's ſins*.——But it is *poſſible* for us to err by running into the *oppoſite* extreme. Some men I have known ſo unreaſonably ſcrupulous, as to refuſe not only their friendſhip, but even the common offices of civility, to all thoſe, whoſe characters they diſliked. A degree of auſterity, which is much more likely to leſſen, than to extend, the influence of religion. ——Others again, with ſtill leſs appearance of reaſon, confine their acquaintance to their own ſect and party, and regard every other with averſion or contempt. — On the *firſt* of theſe improprieties, as leſs common, I think it needleſs to enlarge; and ſhall only juſt take notice, that the practice is evidently contrary to the uniform example of *Chriſt* himſelf. The *ſecond* is both very frequent, and very hurtful to ſociety. Many occaſions may occur in the courſe of our lives (it is unqueſtionably our duty to *ſeek* ſuch occa-

ſions) in which by converſing freely with oppoſite factions, we may allay the violence of both. Even, if this be impoſſible, we may ſtill be able to *ſerve* thoſe whom we cannot *convince*; and we may find, in the very worſt ſect that ever exiſted, *ſome* perſons whom we ſhould *wiſh* to ſerve. The moſt abſurd principles, whether of religion or government, are ſometimes united with the moſt amicable diſpoſitions: and the ſame man whom we deteſt in his public character, may in private life have the ſtrongeſt title to our eſteem and friendſhip.

Indeed a promiſcuous acquaintance with men of different opinions, beſides the chance we have of doing good to *them*, would be highly beneficial to *ourſelves*. Nothing is more likely to enlarge our views, and correct our prejudices, than a frequent attention, and friendly regard, to thoſe who differ from us. Scarce any man is fit to be truſted with the *ſole* conduct of his own underſtanding; and *they* perhaps *leſs* than others, who apply themſelves moſt aſſiduouſly to the purſuit of knowledge. A ſtudious and a ſolitary life expoſes us, more than any thing, to the deluſions

deluſions of fancy; and the difference, I think, cannot be great, whether we converſe with ourſelves *only*, or with men whoſe minds are caſt in the *ſame mould*. In either caſe, through the force of habit, our ideas run on in the ſame channel; and if we have once happened to engage in a wrong courſe, we perſiſt in it for life. Whereas a little timely oppoſition might eaſily have diverted the ſtream of our thoughts, and turned them on their proper objects.

Yet this very circumſtance, which ſo ſtrongly recommends a more enlarged acquaintance, *may* poſſibly expoſe us to difficulties and dangers, not to be ſurmounted without conſtant attention and great command of ourſelves. Such is the frailty of human nature, that difference of opinion (eſpecially on points of ſeeming importance) will often produce a conflict of paſſions; and whenever theſe are engaged, information and conviction become impoſſible. Not only ſo, but the impreſſions will often remain long after the occaſion which give them birth. And thus men's tempers are gradually ſoured; and that charity confined within narrow li-

mits, which ought to extend itſelf to the whole world. — Such conteſts are improper and hurtful, no doubt, whatever be the character of the parties engaged: but they are peculiarly unbecoming in miniſters of the Goſpel, and productive of peculiar miſchief. They cannot fail of expoſing us to the cenſure of the world, and throwing a diſgrace on our profeſſion; and perhaps (through the malice and ignorance of mankind) they may bring religion itſelf into contempt.

It will greatly contribute to prevent theſe evils, if we uſe our beſt endeavours to ſuppreſs and ſtifle that perpetual diſturber of the peace and happineſs of mankind, the *ſpirit of party*. We cannot indeed be *too* zealous for the *Britiſh* conſtitution, and the *Proteſtant* ſucceſſion: becauſe we cannot ſet too high a value on the bleſſings we enjoy of civil and religious liberty. But our affection, or our diſaffection, to particular men; our attachment or oppoſition to particular meaſures; may eaſily be carried to exceſs. —— Seldom, I fear, is *ſuch* zeal founded on knowledge,

ledge. The very facts which are neceſſary for the direction of our judgment are known to us imperfectly at beſt; and in many caſes are intirely out of our reach. Be they ever ſo clear, it will ſtill be an arduous attempt to decide on queſtions little connected with our education, and profeſſion, and manner of life. The views of a politician, are ſo complicated, and the circumſtances, which are to fix his choice, are every way ſo uncertain; that a reaſonable man, not uſed to ſuch inquiries, will in moſt caſes find it extremely difficult, to affirm or deny, to praiſe or blame. And what *neceſſity* is there to do either? I am ſure there is no wiſdom in doing it confidently; and no humanity in refuſing to others the ſame liberty we take. In obedience to law, and ſubmiſſion to lawful authority all reaſonable men will unite: in other matters let us be content to differ. It is ſcarce probable, that the points for which we contend are of more importance, than the reciprocal good offices of private friendſhip, and the preſervation of the public peace: neither of which can be long maintained among men whoſe affections are mu-

tually alienated by the rage and violence of party ſpirit.

Love, we know, *is the fulfilling of the law*: it is the principle, and the meaſure, of Chriſtian perfection. Whatever tends to contract or weaken it, is not only hurtful to ſociety, but contrary to *religion*. It concerns us above all things to cultivate it in our breaſts, and expreſs it by our actions; and, by every art of condeſcenſion, of gentleneſs, of forbearance, to ſpread and communicate it as wide as poſſible. To this one point, whether in ſociety or ſolitude, whether in buſineſs or pleaſure, we ſhould conſtantly tend. With *this* in view, the moſt frivolous amuſements may juſtly obtain the name of virtue: without it, the moſt ſerious employments are trifling and vain.—Whatever may have been the courſe of our *ſtudies*, if they have made us more humane, more friendly, more uſeful to others—we have *then* ſtudied to good purpoſe: whilſt *they*, on the contrary, whoſe intercourſe with the world has only ſerved to inſpire them with ſentiments of diſtruſt and hatred, have reaſon to wiſh, that they had

had never know *ſociety*.——We cannot have a ſurer mark, that we have purſued *both* theſe objects wiſely and virtuouſly, than to find both purſuits meet in this happy concluſion — a more extenſive, and more active BENEVOLENCE.

CHARGE

CHARGE II.

On the NATURE and END of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

Reverend BRETHREN,

I. IT has been a great misfortune to the intereſts of Chriſtianity, in all ages of the church, that men have ſearched the Scriptures rather to gratify their curioſity, than to regulate their lives and manners. What was ſaid of *Socrates*, that he called down philoſophy from the clouds, and introduced her to the commerce of the world, may be applied in a very eminent degree to our *divine maſter*. It was not *his* purpoſe, to bewilder his followers in abſtruſe and airy ſpeculations; but *to call ſinners to repentance*.*

* Mat. ix. 13.

Happy

Happy had it been for the world, if the ſame end had been uniformly and ſteadily purſued by ſucceeding teachers! But the doctrine of *Jeſus*, like that of *Socrates*, being perverted from its original deſign—*plura genera effecit diſſentientium philoſophorum:* has given birth to innumerable ſects and parties, engaged in all the rage of controverſy on uſeleſs, or uncertain, or unintelligible, queſtions. And it is indeed no wonder, that religion and philoſophy have had the ſame fate; ſince both have been ſtudied on the ſame principle—*diſputandi cauſâ, non vivendi.*

True religion is a *practical* thing: not addreſſed to the head, but the heart. *Articles* of *faith* are of no further ſignificance, than as they direct or animate us in the diſcharge of our *duty*. If, inſtead of this, they divert our attention from the principal affairs of human life; if they inflame our paſſions and corrupt our morals; if they ſtir up on the one hand a ſpirit of perſecution, a ſpirit of rebellion on the other: the ſoundeſt believer may be the worſt Chriſtian.

To

To ſay what I *have* ſaid is not to ſpeak lightly or irreverently of the doctrines of our moſt holy religion. For *thoſe* doctrines are recommended to us by the moſt apparent good influence on the conduct of our lives. And, if we would expreſs the higheſt regard and veneration for them; we *can* ſay no more, than that they are excellently well calculated to make us GOOD and to make us HAPPY.—Thoſe two words comprehend all poſſible praiſe.

Yet there are not wanting men, even in this enlightened age, (a character we take to ourſelves upon a very doubtful title) who affect on all occaſions to ſpeak of morality with contempt; and even to place it in *oppoſition* to Chriſtianity. — What theſe men underſtand by either term, it would be uſeleſs to inquire: and indeed I am not ſure, whether they themſelves be able to anſwer the queſtion. But, were they capable of uſing language in any preciſe ſignification, they would have known long ſince, that this poor deſpiſed morality is the very perfection of the *human* nature, and the brighteſt image of the *divine*: they would have known that the

the faith of a Chriſtian is only a *ladder* to lift him to ſuperior goodneſs, and (by ſure conſequence) to ſuperior happineſs.

I have ſaid, and repeat it, that their ignorance of theſe things ariſes from their want of preciſion in *language*. It would be almoſt unfair to ſuppoſe, that they uſe their words in the ſame ſenſe with other men.——For ſurely they do not intend to depreciate the *principles* of morality —— *love of God*, and *love of man*. And as little, I ſhould think, could they ſlight the *practice* of it, if they underſtood it to comprehend a ſteady and uniform purſuit of the *common good* of mankind. Yet they who are accuſtomed to ſpeak accurately mean nothing leſs than this by a *moral life*: ſuch a *conduct*, on ſuch *principles*, conſtitutes the very idea, the eſſence of *virtue*.

And is this now to be conſidered as *oppoſite* to *Chriſtianity?* Not in St. *Paul*'s opinion moſt certainly: who gives charity* expreſſly the preference to faith itſelf; and

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

who

who tells us that *love is the fulfilling of the law*.*—Doubtleſs the ſame commandments, which our Saviour pronounces firſt and greateſt under the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation, muſt be the main pillars of *every* religion, which comes from God. *To love him with all the heart, and with all the underſtanding, and with all the ſoul, and with all the ſtrength, and to love his neighbours as himſelf, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and ſacrifices*.‡

It may be ſaid perhaps, as it has been, that theſe ideas are chimerical. That *human* virtue is at beſt imperfect: ſeldom pure in the principle from which it ſprings; and too often interrupted and diverted even in its moſt proſperous courſe. It is in vain, they tell us, that we ſound forth the praiſes of *that* morality, which we practice ſo ill. We are all *ſinners:* all are obnoxious to the diſpleaſure of God; and therefore muſt all fly for refuge to the arms of a Redeemer.

To this grave declamation, I freely own, I have nothing to oppoſe. And why indeed

* Rom. xiii. 10. ‡ Mark xii. 33.

ſhould

ſhould I wiſh to oppoſe it? For it contradicts nothing I have ſaid, nothing I meant to ſay.—It ſtill remains true, that the doctrines of Jeſus were deſigned to make us *zealous of good works*.* It ſtill remains true, that *holineſs* of *life* is the main end and purpoſe of *all* divine revelation. It ſtill remains true, that *Chriſtian perfection* is nothing more than *human virtue* ſublimed and purified by the aids of *religion*.

We are ſaved, you ſay, by *no merit* of *our own*, but through God's free grace in *Chriſt Jeſus*.—So far as I *underſtand* the propoſition, I moſt firmly believe it. *Chriſt* is *the author of eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey him*.†—But which *part*, do you think, of this text concerns us moſt? In what *Chriſt* has done we have, we *can* have, no ſhare, unleſs to return *thanks* to God and Him. It is *our* buſineſs ſo to *apply* the conſideration of God's great mercy, that we may be ſtirred up to a vigorous and active *obedience*. *This* only is our proper ſphere: not to ſcrutinize the *reaſons* of the divine diſpenſations; not

* Titus ii. 14. † Heb. v. 9.

to

to explain the myſteries of God's grace by the maxims of vain philoſophy; not to ſwell out the ſlender articles of belief contained in Scripture by mere human inventions; and leaſt of all to cenſure and perſecute our brethren, perhaps for no better reaſon, than becauſe *their* nonſenſe and *ours* wears a different dreſs.

Scripture-doctrine lies in a narrow compaſs. It is confined to a few very general propoſitions, which give us only juſt light enough to direct our ſteps in the way to eternal happineſs. They who pretend to ſee *more*, ſee leſs than nothing; miſtake the illuſions of fancy for the objects of faith, and bewilder themſelves in the purſuit of dreams and ſhadows.

The inſtructors of young ſtudents in the profeſſion of divinity are uſed to recommend to them the ſtudy of the Scriptures in the original tongues; the ſtudy of antiquity, ſacred and profane; the aſſiſtance of critics and commentators, of different ages and different ſects in religion. All this is right and uſeful. But there is *one* preparation more of

of greater importance than all the reſt: I mean a *clear head*, unembarraſſed by *ſcholaſtic terms*. So far as *theſe* prevail, whether in philoſophy or religion, you may be very ſure, there is no *true knowledge*. Affix *determined* ideas to every word you uſe, and the moſt tremendous ſyſtems will ſhrink into almoſt nothing. Whoever will make himſelf fully maſter of the Third Book of the *Eſſay on Human Underſtanding*, will ſoon ſee what he is to think, of *both ſides* alike, in far the greater part of our religious controverſies. Or, if he wants to be aſſiſted in the *application* of Mr. *Locke*'s doctrine to Theological Subjects, *Father Paul's Council of Trent*, and the *Biſhop of Meaux's Variations*, and, I may add to theſe, ſome of the *Provincial Letters*, will give him all the aſſiſtance he can deſire: will ſufficiently unfold to him the nature of thoſe diſputes, which have torn in pieces the church of Chriſt.

It was the great deſign of the Goſpel to *turn many to righteouſneſs* by the gracious offer of ſalvation through Chriſt. Gratitude requires us to conſider, *who made* this offer, and prudence requires us to meditate on the

offer itself. — When we have done this, nothing remains, but to list ourselves under the banners of a crucified Saviour, *to fight a good fight*, and *be faithful unto death*. This as I take it is MORALITY.

II. Yet let it not be understood, from what has been said, that I would consider Revelation as a *system* of *Ethics*. Nothing less. At the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world, such a system seems not to have been wanted; not at least within the compass of the *Roman* empire, where arts and civility very generally prevailed. And, if it *had* been wanted, I know not whether the *New Testament* would have been sufficient to supply the defect. Nay, I think, we may safely assert, that the science of morals, with or without a revelation, is and must be collected, by the greater part of mankind, from the common course of events, as they occur to daily experience.

1. I observe, that, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, a new system of morals was *little wanted*. Not to mention the innumerable treatises which are lost on this subject,

ject, *Xenophon*, *Ariſtotle*, and *Cicero* have left us a rule little ſhort of perfection: and even what was deficient in the writings of philoſophers, common ſenſe, and common utility in great meaſure ſupplied. For proof of this you need only conſult the precepts of *rhetoricians*, and the practice of *orators*. You will find, if I miſtake not, the very *ſame* topics of *praiſe* and *cenſure*, the ſame arts of *adulation* and *invective*, among ancient ſpeakers and modern. Whereas every material change in the rule of moral actions muſt have turned reproach into honour, or compliments into ſatire. They who ſay, that *humility* and *forgiveneſs* of injuries were no virtues upon the *Heathen* plan, are juſt as little to be regarded, as thoſe who maintain, that a man may be a good *Chriſtian* without *friendſhip* or *love of his country*. In both caſes equally men find not the names, and therefore conclude the things themſelves to be wanting. —— It is indeed true, that the virtue of *piety* was of a very equivocal kind in the Pagan world. But this was from ignorance of nature, not of morals. Had the Heathens known the One God, as Chriſtians do, or ſhould, know him; they would have entertained the ſame

ſentiments with Chriſtians, of the love, and fear, and reſignation, and truſt, which are due to the ſupreme Being. In fact they *did* entertain theſe notions: ſo many of them, I mean, as *ſaw* through the abſurdity of the eſtabliſhed and popular theology. But,

2. If a new ſyſtem of morals *had* been wanting, it does not appear that the New Teſtament would have been ſufficient to ſupply the defect. At moſt it can only be conſidered as an improvement or finiſhing of the ſyſtems already ſubſiſting. Many indeed of the duties of life are *recommended* and *enforced* by our Saviour and his Apoſtles: but they are not uſually *explained* or *determined*. It would be vain to apply to your Bible for a diſtinct notion of juſtice, or temperance, or fortitude. If you know not theſe things, before you *begin* your ſearch, you conſult the Scriptures in vain.——Even with regard to thoſe points of morality which are more particularly *inculcated* upon Chriſtians, revelation will aſſiſt but little without the aid and comment of reaſon. Why elſe do we ſee a numerous ſect of Chriſtians, who deny the lawfulneſs of *oaths?* who maintain univerſally, that

evil

evil is not to be reſiſted, and that we ſhall offend God, if we fight for our country? Why has it been ſuppoſed, not among Catholics only, but even in the earlier ages of the church, that it is highly meritorious, for men to retire from all the duties of life, and to ſet themſelves in oppoſition to the *evident* deſign of their Maker, the perpetuity of the human ſpecies? Or how came the church of *England* herſelf to admit into her boſom the doctrine of *paſſive-obedience?* — Theſe notions are not to be refuted from the bare *words* of Scripture: words, which taken alone, are very fairly capable of the ſenſe imputed to them. But this ſenſe is over-ruled by the verdict of reaſon: and we ſhould do an injury to the ſacred writings, if we did not interpret them (as we do the beſt human compoſitions) conformably to the rules of good ſenſe.—I ſaid,

3. That the ſcience of morals, with or without a revelation, *can* only be collected, by the greater part of mankind, from obſervation and experience of the common courſe of events.—The more *ſimple* principles may indeed be taught: unleſs where a good diſ-

poſition or right education has prevented the uſe of teaching: (for, after all, *benevolence* of *nature* and early *diſcipline*, are better guides, than *all* the books of philoſophy that ever were written). But where, I ſay, this is not the caſe, *ſome* teaching may be uſeful and neceſſary. Yet I doubt, whether even ſo ſhort a ſyſtem as the *Ten Commandments* do not contain more, than the bulk of mankind are capable of learning by *words only*. They muſt be taught from what they *ſee*, and from what they *feel*. Abſtracted ideas, and general reaſoning, are very unſuitable to their apprehenſion, and very unlikely to make a deep or laſting impreſſion. But they know the reſtraints laid on them by the *laws* of their country: they *feel* the reſtraints which *nature* has laid on the indulgence of their appetites: they find a *ſtill farther* reſtraint, both on private and ſocial conduct, from the inconvenience of loſing their *credit* and character in the world. In theſe ways, and ways like theſe, men imbibe the moſt important precepts of morality: ſeldom indeed pure and genuine; but as little corrupted as the preſent ſtate of things will allow, and much better

better than they could learn them from *words*, however artificially put together.

III. In what has been ſaid I have attempted to ſhew you, what religion *is not*. It is not a ſyſtem of *ſpeculative truths:* it is not a ſyſtem of *moral precepts*.——In ſhewing you what it *is*, I ſhall be leſs tedious. For it may be ſaid in few words, as well as in many, that the Goſpel of Chriſt is ſimply and purely the offer of *pardon* to *repenting ſinners*; the gift of eternal life freely tendered to all who *ſubmit* to the *authority* of their Saviour, and are careful to yield *obedience* to his *will*. Submiſſion to his authority is only another name for *Chriſtian faith*; and obedience to his will moſt perfectly coincides with the uniform diſcharge of every *moral duty*.

Chriſt did not ſo much intend to *teach* morality, as to *inforce* it. The eternal rules of right and wrong were at all times *ſufficiently* apparent from the ordinary and ſettled courſe of things. But theſe rules ſtood in need of a more powerful SANCTION, than human reaſon knew how to apply. Such a ſanction they have received: for Jeſus Chriſt

*hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel**. And, one would think, the hopes of a *blessed eternity*, grounded on the express word of God, should carry with them an irresistible force on the affections and wills of men!

In explaining this Gospel of Jesus Christ, we may be a little, and but little, more particular. That eternity of happiness which is offered to Christians, appears not only to be *offered* them, but *obtained* for them by our blessed *Redeemer*, in conformity to the will of his heavenly Father. An act of disobedience in our *first parents*, (of which we are very obscurely and imperfectly informed) and innumerable faults in all their *descendants*, appear to have obstructed this mighty benefit. But our Redeemer, we are told, by what he *did* and *suffered*, effectually *removed* these obstructions; and *gave power to as many as received him to become the sons of God*†.

Here I find myself obliged to stop. *Why* the offences of us for our forefathers were not

* 2. Tim. i. 10. † John i. 12.

to

to be pardoned *without* a Redeemer; *why* the Judge of the world ſhould make the happineſs of *one* being depend on the conduct of *another*; and *why*, in particular, guilt was not to be waſhed away, without the ſufferings of innocence: are points of which I find nothing in Scripture; and of which therefore I am not aſhamed to ſay, *I know nothing*.

Still I return to what can never be ſaid too often. It is the main deſign of the Goſpel of Chriſt to make us HOLY here, that we may be HAPPY hereafter. And what more effectual MOTIVE to holineſs, than the ſure proſpect of eternal happineſs? God's mercy through Chriſt is no barren ſpeculation. It was not revealed to us, to ſharpen our wits, by furniſhing a new ſubject for debate and contention; but to make us warm and active in the diſcharge of our duty, and to melt our hearts to the love of God and goodneſs. We are not to ſtand *gazing*, like idle ſpectators, on the prize, which is ſet before us; but to *run, that we may obtain it*. *

* 1. Cor. ix. 24.

IV. I have

IV. I have endeavoured to repreſent to you the *primary* end of the Chriſtian Revelation. But I meant not to exclude *other* beneficial purpoſes, connected with it, or reſulting from it. Thus for inſtance,

1. Chriſtianity has greatly enlarged our knowlege of the *Supreme Being*; and by that means extended the lines of moral duty.—Men's conceptions of the Divinity were of neceſſity to be improved and corrected, before they could be capable of receiving the Goſpel of Chriſt. For the gods, not only of the people, but of many ſects among the philoſophers, were very unfit perſons to publiſh a diſpenſation of grace for the recovery of ſinful mortals. As this reaſon made it requiſite for the founders of Chriſtianity to preach the *living God*, in oppoſition to Polytheiſm and idolatry; ſo it could not but happen, that this new light would open to men's view new obligations; and lead them to a ſpecies of moral virtues, which few among the heathens ever knew. *God is a ſpirit*, ſays our Saviour, *and they which worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth**.

* John iv. 14.

We

We may obſerve however, that God is repreſented to us in Scripture *chiefly*, though not always, under *relative* ideas. Little is ſaid of his nature and eſſence; ſubjects not ſuited to our capacity, or connected with our duty. He is made known to us as the Author of life and happineſs; as the Father and Lord of the univerſe. His wiſdom, his power, his goodneſs, diſplayed in his diſpenſations to mankind; his ſuperintendency and care over us, both here and hereafter—*theſe* are the perfections moſt clearly revealed: theſe are they which we beſt conceive, and which concern us moſt.

2. The light of revelation gave occaſion to the overthrow and ruin of Pagan ſuperſtition, and all the immoralities connected with it. But much of this benefit was afterwards loſt: as the ſame ſuperſtition revived, with little more than a change of names, among thoſe who *called* themſelves Chriſtians. Popery is indeed nothing better than a refined ſpecies of Paganiſm; and ſo far as *this* extends, the Goſpel has failed of its genuine effect, and left men, as it found them, Polytheiſts and Idolaters.

3. Though

3. Though it was not Chriſt's purpoſe to give a *ſyſtem* of *morals*; yet it highly became his office, to correct prevailing *miſtakes* on queſtions of morality, and to ſupply ſuch *defects* as he found in the common notions. His chief view, as we have often ſaid, was to add a powerful ſanction to the moral law. But this of courſe muſt give occaſion for perpetual *references* to the *law itſelf:* and therefore for frequent *explanations* and *corrections*; by which means men's ideas might be rendered more accurate, and their views more comprehenſive. Not indeed (as I before took notice) by ſubſtituting the letter of Revelation, in the place of reaſon; but by applying *both* to the beſt advantage, through the friendly aid they impart to each other.

4. It was a very material benefit of the Chriſtian Revelation, that it exalted *human virtues* into *religious duties*. The *ſame* conduct was virtuous, and *known* to be ſo, on the Heathen plan, and on the Chriſtian. But many kinds and degrees of perfection, which to a Heathen were objects of admiration only, are matters of neceſſity in the life of a Chriſtian. A Heathen might either purſue them with

with honour, or neglect them without reproach: to a Chriſtian they are of univerſal and indiſpenſable obligation.

5. *Laſtly*, The founders of our religion have done good ſervice to the cauſe of virtue, by uniting us in the *external profeſſion* of repentance, and faith, and love: a deſign, to which thoſe few ſimple RITES, retained in the church of Chriſt, are evidently ſubſervient; and of which the inſtitution of a *church*; *i. e.* a viſible ſociety of Chriſtians, made an eſſential part.—Who can forbear lamenting, that this wiſe and neceſſary proviſion, for the ſupport of piety and virtue, ſhould have been made the occaſion, as it ever has been, of *ſtrife, and confuſion, and every evil work?* But it is no new thing, for men to abuſe the bleſſings of God to their own deſtruction: and our Saviour's prediction, concerning the event of things, has been but too plainly fulfilled; *I came not to ſend peace on earth, but a ſword**.

V. From what has been ſaid, I beg leave to draw one obſervation, for the benefit of

* Mat. x. 34.

the

the younger part of this audience. — It is not the buſineſs of a *Chriſtian preacher* to perplex himſelf, and weary his audience, with deep points of *ſchool divinity*. It would ſeem a ſtrange queſtion, yet very often it is the *real* queſtion, whether *Plato* or *Ariſtotle* be a better expoſitor of the doctrines of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Believe me, Chriſtian congregations are aſſembled for a very different purpoſe; and it is *our* buſineſs to inſpire them with reverence for God; with gratitude to their Redeemer; with fervent charity for one another: it is *our* buſineſs to reclaim them from the error of their ways, by inculcating the gracious promiſes of the Goſpel; or (where theſe fail) by alarming their *fears*; by reminding them of the *ſhortneſs* of *life*, and the *certainty* of a *judgment to come*.—To do this, is to preach *Chriſt Jeſus*.

I fear, I ſtand in great need of your indulgence, notwithſtanding the importance of my ſubject, for the time I have ſpent, in delivering my ſentiments upon it: but I aſk *no* indulgence for the *freedom* with which I have done it. For in this I have only done my duty. It is in ſome degree the duty of *every man*,

man, of *every clergyman* moſt undoubtedly, to ſtudy carefully the word of God, and endeavour to find out the true ſenſe of it. And, when this is done, it is *equally* his duty, to *confeſs with his mouth what he believes in his heart* *. If we diſcharge, as we ought, theſe important offices, we ſhall both *ſave ourſelves, and them that hear us*.†

* Rom. x. 9. † 1 Tim. iv. 16.

CHARGE III.

On Religious Liberty.

Reverend Brethren,

AT our laſt Meeting I endeavoured to repreſent to you the true principles of Church *Government**: my preſent ſubject ſhall be *Liberty*. *Juſt* government and *reaſonable* liberty are ſo far from being *inconſiſtent*, that they are *inſeparable*.

It was generally conceived, before the time of the revolution, that civil governors were obliged by their office to ſupport and propagate *true Religion*. But this notion is now ſo fully exploded, that we ſeldom meet with any man, even in the warmth of con-

* See theſe principles briefly ſtated in Diſ. VI, VII.

troverſy,

troverſy, who is hardy enough to defend it. Men's *temporal*, not their *ſpiritual*, intereſts, are under the care of the magiſtrate: and he is no otherwiſe concerned in the advancement of *truth*, than as it ſtands connected with the intereſts of *ſociety*.

On this principle I propoſe to examine the various branches of religious liberty; and to ſettle as preciſely as the ſubject will bear, to what length they may be permitted to grow. All of them, I think, may conveniently be referred to three heads: freedom of *opinion*, freedom of *worſhip*, and freedom in *converſation and writing*; to each of theſe points I ſhall ſpeak in its turn.

I. Nothing is more true than the proverbial expreſſion, that *thought is free*. It is free even from the dominion of a man's own mind; and therefore it *muſt* be free from the authority of the magiſtrate. On this ground we may ſecurely maintain that *no opinions* whatever, not even the moſt *pernicious* to mankind, are fit objects of *puniſhment*. For puniſhment is intended as a reſtraint on the *will*: that either

the offender himſelf, or others by his example, may *fear* to tranſgreſs. It is therefore applied abſurdly, and by *conſequence* unjuſtly, in matters of opinion; in which the will has either no ſhare at all, or none that falls within the *diſcernment* of a *human judge*. We cannot *change* our opinions at pleaſure: nor will the ſufferings of a miſtaken man prevent others from falling into the ſame deluſion. And this is not only true of *poſitive puniſhment*: it holds equally good of what have been called *negative diſcouragements*. —— All *manner* of diſtinctions between man and man, intended, *not* to prevent us from *acting*, but from *thinking*, wrong, are equally vain and unjuſtifiable.

Some indeed have maintained, that theſe diſcouragements may do good ſervice, both to religion and ſociety, by compelling men to *conſider*. But I will not waſte time in confuting this idle pretence: a pretence much more favourable to *falſe* religion than true; and attended with this ſingular inconvenience, that it proves, if any thing, the very *contrary* of what it was deſigned to prove. For we have more reaſon to expect want of conſideration

tion in thoſe who *follow*, than in thoſe who *oppoſe*, the religion of the magiſtrate. I ſay not this of our *own* nation, but of *all* the countries under heaven: for the reaſon indeed is univerſal.

But ſhould we admit, for argument's ſake, that *ſome* benefit might ariſe from diſcouraging hurtful opinions; thoſe at leaſt which paſs for ſuch, in the judgment of the magiſtrate: yet ſtill would this benefit be far out-weighed by the ill conſequences attending it. For let it be remembered that we are here conſidering the *opinions themſelves*, not the *communication* of them to others. How then ſhall the magiſtrate diſcern the ſecrets of men's hearts? Not ſurely by an arbitrary uſe of priſons and tortures.—The utmoſt that can be deſired by a *Proteſtant* perſecutor is only a liberal proviſion of *oaths* and *teſts*; the *refuſal* of which may be equivalent to a conviction. But, though on other occaſions theſe methods of inquiry may be uſed wiſely and juſtly, yet in the adminiſtration of *penal laws* they would be unjuſt and cruel. It is, I think, a maxim in the law of *England*, that no man is obliged

to *accuſe himſelf*: and this maxim is not only agreeable to the dictates of humanity, but of ſound *policy*. — For the contrary practice, it may be readily imagined, would be a perpetual leſſon of inſincerity. We know by ſad experience, that the moſt ſacred obligations are eaſily broken through by the weight of men's temporal intereſts: and no wiſe lawgiver will ever wiſh to expoſe the virtue of his ſubjects to ſo ſevere a trial.

Enough, I ſuppoſe, has been ſaid on this plain point. It remains only, that I ſubjoin a few cautions, which however are by no means exceptions to the doctrine before us.

I have maintained that no opinions whatever are fit objects of puniſhment; but I have *not* maintained that all opinions are matters of *indifference*. Some there are, which, though not properly *puniſhable*, may yet be highly *prejudicial*. They may be productive of many ill conſequences, to the individual as well as the public; and it may be thought not the leaſt of theſe, that they often exclude honeſt and good men from the moſt important offices of ſociety. It is true, the road

road to ſuch offices, whether in church or ſtate, ought not to be ſhut up to any one citizen, who is qualified to diſcharge them. But opinions themſelves may *diſqualify:* ſome for *particular* offices, ſome for *all* offices, ſome even for *admiſſion* into a civil community*.—It may be proper to give inſtances in each kind. And,

1. It is evident, that the *German Anabaptiſt*, who denied the lawfulneſs of capital puniſhments, was diſqualified for the office of a *judge:* that the *Engliſh Quaker*, who interprets in a literal ſenſe the Goſpel precept of non-reſiſtance, is diſqualified for the office of a *general:* and laſtly, that the *Non-conformiſt*, who cannot in conſcience read our *Liturgy*, is diſqualified for the office of a *miniſter* in the eſtabliſhed church.—Yet theſe diſabilities are not *puniſhments*, in any proper ſenſe of the word; and therefore are not *exceptions* to the doctrine before laid down.

2. They who believe themſelves ſubject to a *foreign* juriſdiction are diſqualified for all manner of offices under their *natural* prince:

* See the Alliance between Church and State,

and therefore *Engliſh Catholics* are not to be truſted with power, if they hold themſelves bound to obey the authority either of *Pope* or *Church*, in oppoſition to that of the *King*. —Yet neither are Catholics juſtly obnoxious to *puniſhment*. Their diſability is an inevitable misfortune, ariſing by *natural* conſequence from the opinions they profeſs.

3. Thoſe furious *Enthuſiaſts* of paſt times, who diſclaimed *all* obligations to civil government, were evidently unfit for civil *protection*. Still they were not to be *puniſhed* for *thinking* wrong: though juſtly excluded from the benefits of law and government, as being *diſqualified* for enjoying them.

Now the miſchief of admitting ſuch unqualified perſons into ſtations where they may be able to do harm, can only be prevented by allowing a right to the magiſtrate of requiring all candidates to *declare* their *opinions*, before they obtain the powers or privileges they ſeek: and this, I conceive, is the proper uſe of *ſubſcriptions*, and *oaths*, and *teſts*; which, though always inconvenient, are ſometimes *neceſſary*.—They were ſo moſt remarkably,

markably, in this kingdom, in the times preceding the revolution; and our anceſtors well underſtood the importance and value of them.

One thing more, and I have done with this part of my ſubject.—It has been imagined, I know not how, that it is beſt for the cauſe of liberty, to leave men's qualifications for civil offices unſettled by any ſtanding law; that the ſovereign may have power either to admit or reject as *he* ſees convenient. —Nothing ſure can be more remote from all appearance of truth. For this is to ſay, that it is ſafer for liberty to truſt to the arbitrary will of the prince, than to be under the guard of general rules, eſtabliſhed by national authority.—I do not indeed affirm, that this branch of laws is, in any nation, juſt what it *ought* to be. I only ſay, that *law* is better than *will*. For the reſt, it muſt ever be acknowledged, that "the wider the bottom is made (conſiſtent with the very *being* of ſociety) the wiſer and juſter is the inſtitution."

II. I come now to conſider *freedom of worſhip*: and this, I think, may be maintained

with almoſt as little limitation as *freedom of opinion*. Certainly we may lay it down as a very *general* principle,

That every member of civil ſociety has a right to the *public exerciſe* of the religion he profeſſes.

The truth of this has been fully eſtabliſhed by many excellent writers. Let it ſuffice to ſay at preſent, that no *ſubject* can *give up* this branch of his natural liberty without *impiety*: and that no ſovereign could *accept* ſuch a transfer, if it were made. — Society itſelf is not more eſſential to the well-being of man than religion: and religion without *public forms* is a name only and a ſhadow. But now ſuch forms, if againſt the dictates of conſcience, are ſubverſive of the very ends for which they were inſtituted. Inſtead of making us better men, and better citizens, they will only teach us to prevaricate both with God and man. No man therefore ſhould be compelled to join in rites he cannot approve; which would only ſerve to make him a *hypocrite*: or reſtrained from thoſe which his

conſci-

conſcience enjoins; for this will tend to make him an *Atheiſt*.

I know of no exception, but one, to the rule here laid down. Though *all* forms of religion are to be tolerated, which are only chargeable with *abſurdity* or *falſhood*, yet what ſhall we ſay to thoſe which are directly *criminal?* Is it fit men ſhould be allowed the liberty of doing *harm?* By no means. No act ought to be tolerated in religious aſſemblies, which is puniſhed *out* of them.

It is not that our governors have a right to direct us in the choice of our religion; much leſs to puniſh us for chuſing *wrong:* but they have a right to *guard* the lives and properties of their ſubjects.— Should a man chuſe to ſacrifice a *Hecatomb* to *Jupiter* or *Apollo*, I know of no power on earth that has authority to forbid him: but ſhould he offer his *neighbour's lamb*, even to the true God, he would become juſtly obnoxious to puniſhment. This ariſes from the evident *neceſſities* of human affairs. For let the pretence of *conſcience* be allowed to ſanctify a *crime*, and a door will be open to all manner of

of wickedneſs.—But then it is the *miſchief*, not the *ſin*, which the magiſtrate is concerned to prevent. He has *nothing* to do with the hearts or conſciences of men. And give me leave to add, that it requires great caution and prudence to *apply* this exception, as it ought to be applied. The community have a right to defend *themſelves*, without diſtinction of perſons or places; and by conſequence to repel and puniſh INJUSTICE in every perſon, and in every place: and if there be any *other* offence that ſtrikes directly at the peace and happineſs of ſociety, it is plainly the *intereſt* of ſociety that the offender ſhould ſuffer for it. But let not this be made a pretence, on account of *remote* and *uncertain* conſequences, for diſturbing and breaking up the religious aſſemblies of quiet men and good ſubjects.

There is indeed another caſe which *looks* like an exception to our general principle; but cannot, I think, with *propriety* be ſo called. I mean the caſe of a religious ſect, who entertain *political* notions inconſiſtent with their allegiance. It cannot be pretended that ſuch a ſect have the ſame title to protection

tion with other ſubjects; as they can give no ſecurity for their obedience: and ſhould they be abſolutely *baniſhed* in a time of public danger, I know not that ſuch a ſtep could be juſtly blamed. Not that men are to be *puniſhed* for the exerciſe of their religion: but their religion itſelf *diſables* them from remaining in a ſociety, to the *laws* of which they cannot in conſcience ſubmit.—Thus the *Catholics*, both in England and Ireland, were evidently *incapable* of being good ſubjects to King *William*; as being devoted by the very *principles* of their religion to the ſervice of the *baniſhed monarch:* and even devotion to the *Pope*, as profeſſed by many of the religious orders, ſeems to me to carry with it a *perpetual* incapacity for living in *any* civil community whatever. In ſuch caſes, if the magiſtrate, for reaſons of convenience, does not *chuſe* to proceed to extremities, he is doubtleſs concerned to take every precaution for the *ſecurity* of himſelf and his people. And perhaps it would be difficult to find any method of proceeding leſs liable to objection, than what our governors in England have long purſued; a legal prohibition of Popiſh rites and ceremonies, very tenderly inforced.

The

The magiſtrate is armed with power to protect the community againſt any ill deſigns which theſe men may form. Yet ſtill he can afford them, in times of public tranquillity, ſuch degrees of indulgence or mercy, as he ſees convenient. The laws even againſt their *prieſts* are perhaps continued in force for no other purpoſe, but to keep them more intirely in the *power* of government: and are rather to be conſidered as inſtruments of terror, to be uſed when *occaſion* requires, than as conſtituting a part in the *regular* adminiſtration of things.*

If there be any truth in this repreſentation, what muſt we think of thoſe men, who are continually calling out on their ſuperiors, often too in ſcurrilous and reproachful language, to put theſe *penal* laws in execution? Whatever abhorrence they may affect for Popery, they plainly agree with it in its *worſt* principle, *intolerance* to thoſe who differ from them. If this conduct proceed from *religious* motives, they *know not what ſpirit they are of.* For *true* religion can never ſuffer from liberty of conſcience. If they pretend zeal for the *ſtate*, I fear it is only the zeal of

* This was written in the year 1763.

mutinous

mutinous ſoldiers, who are too *brave* to ſubmit to the direction of their leaders.—Theſe very perſons, if I am not greatly miſtaken, would have been the foremoſt to blame the *French* monarch for revoking the edict of *Nuntes*. Yet had not he the *ſame* right to perſecute *Huguenots*, as we have to perſecute *Papiſts?* Was it not neceſſary *there*, as well as here, to reſtrain the growth and propagation of a ſect, which had already done *much* miſchief to the ſtate, and was capable of doing *more?* And might not a *republican* ſpirit have proved as fatal to *French* monarchy, as the ſpirit of *Popery itſelf* can be to *Engliſh* liberty? I know it has been ſaid, and even the excellent Mr. *Locke* ſeems to have fallen into this opinion, that Papiſts being *intolerant* themſelves, have no *right* to expect indulgence from others. But have *Calviniſts*, when in power, been always friends to toleration? Let them take care how they urge an argument, that may with ſo much eaſe be retorted upon them. And indeed *what* ſect can be found, among all that take the name of Chriſtians, which has preſerved itſelf untainted from the ſpirit of perſecution? *He that is without ſin among us, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

It

It appears upon the whole, that the caſe of the *Engliſh* Catholics is no exception to the doctrine of toleration. For in propriety of ſpeech Catholics are *not Engliſhmen:* they are ſcarce to be called members of the ſame community with ourſelves. The *protection* they receive is, like the *allegiance* they pay, *imperfect* and *precarious*.—Yet ſtill they *are* protected: and it is a proof of the wiſdom, not the weakneſs of our government, that ſo far as can poſſibly conſiſt with the *public ſafety*, they are indulged in the exerciſe of their religion. Men *will* not remain long, and it is not fit they *ſhould* remain, in a country which deprives them of this ineſtimable benefit.

III. The laſt head of religious liberty is freedom in *converſation* and *writing*. — I join theſe together, though I think ſome difference ought to be made between them. Freedom of *converſation* is ſo *eſſential* to the happineſs of ſocial life, that it is ſcarce conceiveable men ſhould ever conſent to part with it *on any* conſideration whatever.—Add to this the extreme *difficulty* of giving no offence *with our tongues*; and the *danger* that

our

our ſentiments may be miſtaken or miſrepreſented by ignorant or partial hearers. Many things fall from us in the courſe of debate, which, on a moment's conſideration, we wiſh to retract. Many debates are purſued without any ſerious conviction, only to ſee *how far* an argument may be carried, or *what* is the beſt method of expoſing its fallacy; or perhaps purely as an exerciſe of the *underſtanding*, or a trial of *ſkill* between the combatants. And what more eaſy, than for a malicious obſerver to make a report of ſuch converſation not abſolutely *falſe*, which may yet prove *fatal* to an innocent man?

For theſe reaſons a wiſe and juſt government will be extremely tender of inflicting puniſhment for *words*; except only in ſuch caſes where they ſtrike at the very foundations of ſociety. *Then* indeed it is high time for the magiſtrate to interpoſe. Let men diſpute as they pleaſe on points of ſpeculation: but if they wilfully *calumniate*; if they weaken the *credit*, and damage the *fortunes* of their neighbours; if they ſtir up *ſedition* and *rebellion* againſt the ſtate: they may, they *muſt*, be puniſhed. For civil

ſociety

ſociety would either not ſubſiſt *at all*, or ſubſiſt to *no good purpoſe*, if ſuch offences were ſuffered to eſcape with impunity.—— Theſe caſes however are very diſtinguiſhable from others; and may all be comprehended under one general rule: I mean, that every man be at liberty to converſe as he pleaſes, provided he do *no injury* to any other man.

But the reaſons juſt mentioned cannot be applied to the *remaining* branch of religious liberty, the liberty of *writing* to the public. On this head there is rather more room for diſtinction and caution.

Let it be premiſed, however, that the moſt *unbounded* freedom is moſt favorable to *truth*. If reaſon and argument be allowed free acceſs to the minds of men, they will ſeldom fail to make a due impreſſion; and, though checked for a time by prejudice and paſſion, are almoſt ſure to triumph in the end.

Let it be further obſerved, that the reception of truth (I mean *religious* truth) can never be prejudicial to *ſociety*. This *muſt* be true on every ſyſtem of philoſophy, except the

the *atheiſtic*. Allow but a wiſe and good Being at the head of the univerſe, and you muſt allow too, that a general diffuſion of knowlege can neither hurt the morals of mankind, nor leſſen their happineſs.

It follows, if I miſtake not, from theſe principles, that the profeſſors of *every* religion ſhould be left at full liberty to *declare* their ſentiments to the world, and to explain the *reaſons* on which they are founded. — It follows that oppoſition to the *eſtabliſhed* religion, if carried on by no other inſtruments than the tongue and the pen, ought not to be conſidered as a crime. To ſuppoſe otherwiſe is to make all reformation impoſſible. It is to juſtify the perſecution of Chriſtians, under Pagan emperors: it is to juſtify the perſecution of our own Proteſtant martyrs: it is to juſtify, in ſome inſtances, the inquiſition itſelf.

But it will *not* follow, that men ſhould be left at liberty to oppoſe *all* religion: to write and print againſt the very Being of a God: to ſpread through a whole nation the execrable doctrine, that the worſt of men

have nothing to fear, either in this life or another, from the vengeance of heaven.

I have ſaid that unbounded freedom is moſt favourable to the cauſe of truth: and, as truth and utility conſtantly coincide under a wiſe and good providence, it may *ſeem* to follow that *all* reſtraints on the liberty of the preſs are prejudicial to the intereſts of ſociety. But to this inference we ſhall be forced by the very nature of things to make two exceptions: the firſt of writings directly *injurious* whether to public or private perſons; the ſecond of writings which recommend or excuſe *criminal actions*.—In regard to the *former* I ſuppoſe it is needleſs to enlarge; the *latter* may be reduced to three caſes.

1. There can be no doubt, that men ought to ſuffer puniſhment for open *perſuaſives* to bad actions. —— Thus, for inſtance, he who prints and diſperſes an invitation to ſubjects to take arms againſt their prince is in all reaſon to be conſidered as guilty of *Treaſon*. And the reaſon holds proportionably in *ſmaller* crimes. For the ſafety of ſociety often requires

quires that *acceſſories* as well as principals, ſhould be cenſured and puniſhed.

2. It ſhould ſeem that men are properly puniſhed for writing in *juſtification* of bad actions. For this is a *ſtanding* perſuaſive to all who are inclined to commit them. If the man who aſſaſſinated *Henry* IV. of *France* was juſtly puniſhed, it could not ſurely have been *unjuſt* to puniſh the *Jeſuit*, who wrote in defence of aſſaſſination*. The great rules of morality, grounded on the experience of all ages, and ſeen to be eſſential to the happineſs of mankind, are not fit ſubjects for diſputation. It is not on theſe, that men ſhould try their ſtrength, and ſharpen their wits. And it muſt proceed from wrong notions of liberty, if we ever give encouragement *here* to offenders of this claſs, when they fly from the juſtice of their own country.

3. It is juſt and reaſonable to puniſh thoſe writers, who maintain the *indifference* of *all*

* It was believed by many that *Ravaillac* was incited to the murder of this Prince by the commendations given to the murtherer of his predeceſſors. See *Mariana de Rage, & Regis Inſtitutione*, Lib. I. C. 6.

human actions: as well thoſe who endeavour to confound the ſacred diſtinctions between right and wrong, as thoſe who would leave virtue deſtitute of reward, and vice fearleſs of puniſhment. And this brings us round again to the point from which we ſet out in this part of our inquiry: I mean, that particular *modes* of religion be left open to public diſcuſſion; but that he who oppoſes *all religions* alike is to be branded and puniſhed as an enemy to ſociety.

The profeſſors of different religions, if left to diſpute freely, are ſo much the more likely to ſtrike out the truth: and ſociety in the end will be ſure to profit from the diſcovery. But what good can be expected from the propagation of ATHEISM? Were its principles *true*, they ought to be carefully *concealed*, as being fatal to the repoſe and happineſs of the world. But being, as they are, undoubtedly *falſe*, to what purpoſe ſhould a few ſceptical philoſophers be allowed to unſettle the minds of men, and weaken the influence of every virtuous principle, one might almoſt ſay, without any *poſſible* good effect?—I can think but of one, that

that deſerves to be named: I mean, the more accurate *ſtudy* of the *evidences* on which religion is founded. But this is an advantage confined to a few thinking men; and by no means to be ſet in competition with the *danger* that may ariſe, by looſening the bonds of all ſocial virtue among the bulk of mankind.

But, within the limits above preſcribed, the *liberty* of the *preſs* can do no laſting miſchief. Particular men may ſometimes be deceived: and the deception may render them either leſs happy in themſelves, or leſs uſeful to ſociety. But in the general reſult of things free inquiry will be ſure to advance both the knowlege and happineſs of mankind. The *magiſtrate* moſt certainly has no pretence of reaſon for exempting his *own* form of religion from *public examination:* and it is impoſſible it ever *ſhould* be examined, if men are not permitted to ſpeak, and to *write* againſt it.

It has been thought by ſome, that, though men ought not to be puniſhed for *oppoſition* to the national religion, they may juſtly be

puniſhed for their *manner* of oppoſing it. And it muſt be owned indeed, that *abuſe and ridicule* are very *improper* methods of treating *ſuch* ſubjects. Yet perhaps, under a *free* government, they are almoſt out of the reach of the civil magiſtrate. For *arbitrary* puniſhments are inconſiſtent with liberty: and *legal* puniſhments may always be eluded by an offence which aſſumes new ſhapes continually.

The ſum of what I have ſaid amounts to this—That freedom of *opinion* is to be allowed univerſally: That freedom of *worſhip* admits of one ſingle exception, namely, that no acts are to be tolerated in religious aſſemblies, and yet puniſhed out of them: Laſtly, That *converſation*, when not injurious to others, ſhould be ſubject to *no reſtraint* at all; and that *writing* or *printing* on ſubjects of religion ſhould *then only* be reſtrained, when employed in open oppoſition to *all* religious principles. And happy is that people, whoſe conſtitution and laws approach the *neareſt* to this degree of perfection!

CHARGE

CHARGE IV.

On the distinct Provinces of REASON and FAITH.

Reverend BRETHREN,

IT has long been esteemed a task of some difficulty to lay down the boundaries between reason and faith, between natural and revealed religion: and, though much has already been performed on this subject, yet something perhaps may still remain to be done; something which may tend to the support of rational piety, against the inroads of Enthusiasm on the one part and Irreligion on the other.

By the word *Religion* (I mean, when considered as a science) we usually understand the *knowledge of God*; of his nature, his character,

racter, his dispensations to mankind. This general idea is common to *all* the parts of religion: it is the *manner* only of *acquiring* this knowledge which distinguishes one branch of it from another.

Whatever is known of God must be known from his works.—But the works of God are of different kinds, and there are different ways of deriving information from them. His *usual* method of acting is uniform and constant: he governs the world by *settled* rules, adapted to the great and general ends of creation and providence. But this established course of things is not *unalterable:* at certain times, and for very important purposes, the supreme Governor has dispensed with his own laws, and broken that customary chain of causes and effects, which might have appeared to us indissoluble.——Now all the knowledge, we can collect from the *ordinary* course of nature, is called *natural:* all that is derived from *extraordinary* events (such as are apparently *opposite* to the course of nature) I call *supernatural* or *revealed*. The *constant* phenomena of nature lead us to discern God's fixed and *general* character: the

irregular

irregular phenomena ſerve to inform us of ſome *particular* diſpenſations. Directly indeed they prove nothing but power: but indirectly they ſerve as *credentials* to a Meſſenger from heaven; ſince we cannot eaſily conceive, how any *inferior* Being ſhould ſuſpend the ſacred laws of the univerſe, without authority from the Supreme.——Now whatever meſſenger is thus authorized to ſpeak to us in God's name, has an undoubted claim to our *belief*. He is ſent to us on purpoſe to convey *ſuch* knowledge, as nature alone *could* not give: The propoſitions therefore communicated to us in this extraordinary manner are objects of faith, not of reaſon.

This may be ſufficient to explain the general diſtinction between the different ways of apprehending religious truths. But it is neceſſary to conſider more minutely how theſe two operations of mind may conſiſt together, ſo as not to weaken or interrupt each other: that both our faith may be rational, and yet our reaſon ſubmit to divine authority. To effect this, I propoſe to lay down ſome few ſimple and leading principles; ſuch as, I think,

I think, may be applied to every doubtful caſe.

I. The firſt maxim, I have to offer, is this —*We cannot believe the* TRUTH *of a propoſition, unleſs we underſtand its* MEANING. Words not underſtood are no objects of faith.

Thus, for inſtance, when a Catholic requires me to believe Tranſubſtantiation, I ſay he requires an *impoſſibility*; for that the *terms* he uſes are without ſignification. The *accidents*, we are told, of Bread and Wine remain; the *ſubſtance* only is taken away: and the ſubſtance again, not the accidents, of the Body and Blood of Chriſt is put into its place. Of theſe two ſubſtances, thus diveſted of their properties, we neither have, nor *can* have, the fainteſt conception. The doctrine then, you ſee, amounts only to this, that one *unknown* and *unintelligible* ſubſtratum is exchanged for another; a propoſition, which involves *nothing*, but impenetrable nonſenſe. The ſame may be ſaid of many others, maintained by the *Romiſh* church; which are unjuſtly cenſured for falſhood, when they are only void of meaning.

ing. Doctrines like these, if they may be called by the *name* of doctrines, serve only to perplex weak minds, and to expose religion to the contempt of its adversaries.

Whatever message comes from God, we receive it with full assurance. But, though we are prepared to *assent* to it without reserve, we must first *understand* it. Be the messenger's credentials ever so strong, yet, if he speak to us in an *unknown* tongue, nothing that he says can make a part of our belief.

Thus far perhaps I may have few opposers: among Protestants I can have none. But the maxim I have laid down extends farther, than at first sight it may appear to do. For, in settling the sense of a proposition offered to my belief, I know no medium between understanding it *perfectly* and *not* understanding it *at all*. It happens in many instances that our knowledge is *short* and *limited*: but it can never be *confused* without our own fault. The little we *do* know we should *endeavour* to know *precisely*. For so long as the sense of any *one word* in a proposition remains

remains unſettled; the propoſition itſelf will be of uncertain ſignification; and, if it make any impreſſion at all on the minds of thoſe who receive it, may lead them to falſhood as eaſily as truth.

But what then (it may be ſaid) if we admit this maxim, will become of the Myſteries of our holy religion? Is it not *eſſential* to *theſe* doctrines to be darkly propoſed, and imperfectly diſcerned?—To anſwer this queſtion, it may be beſt to have recourſe to the Scriptures themſelves.

The word *myſtery* frequently occurs in the New Teſtament: and uſually, if not always, denotes ſome *ſecret* council or purpoſe of God. Is it eſſential then to a ſecret that it ſhould *never* be diſcloſed? Certainly not*. *It is given unto you to* KNOW *the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven* †. Again, *I would not that ye ſhould be* IGNORANT *of this myſtery* ‡. In another place, *the* REVELATION *of the*

* Yet this has been made a ſerious objection to Biſhop *Warburton*'s Explanation of the Myſteries of Paganiſm.

† Mat. xiii. 11.

‡ Rom. xi. 25.

myſtery

myſtery which was kept ſecret ſince the world began *; and laſtly, *Ye may underſtand my knowledge in the myſtery of Chriſt, which in* OTHER AGES *was* NOT *made known unto the ſons of men, as it is now* REVEALED *to his holy apoſtles and prophets by the ſpirit* †. —— I might cite many other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe. But theſe are enough to ſhew, what I meant to ſhew, that it is no way eſſential to a myſtery, to be *ill underſtood*: the word evidently refers to men's *paſt* ignorance, not their *preſent*. In this ſenſe, the *revelation* of a myſtery deſtroys the very *being* of it: the moment it becomes an article of belief, it is myſterious no longer. No one, I ſhould think, who looks into St. *Paul's* writings, can entertain a doubt of the matter.

It were vain however to diſſemble, that Revelation, as well as Reaſon, leaves us *ignorant* of many things we might wiſh to know. I only maintain, that we ſhould not *pretend* to know more than we do. No advantage can ariſe from the uſe of *words*

* Rom. xvi. 25. † Eph. iii. 4.

without

without *ideas*, from whatever authority we derive them. For, as St. *Paul* ſays on another occaſion, *He that ſpeaketh in an* UNKNOWN *tongue ſpeaketh not unto men——for no man* UNDERSTANDETH *him: howbeit in the ſpirit he ſpeaketh myſteries* *.

But are there not many things in Scripture, which we are unable to *comprehend?* and are we therefore not to *believe* them? I anſwer, if the *terms* of a propoſition be *unintelligible*, the propoſition *is not*, becauſe it *cannot be*, an article of our faith. All we can *poſſibly* believe is this (and it amounts to juſt nothing) that the words *we* cannot underſtand may be underſtood by *others*; and may convey to *them* the knowledge of *ſome* truth, which is unknown to *us*. Further than this we cannot go. But it *may* indeed happen, and it is the ſecond maxim I have to propoſe,

II. That a man may underſtand and believe a *general* propoſition, who is not able to aſſign the *particular mode* of it. This caſe, which is widely different from the former, I

* 1 Cor. xiv. 2.

will

will endeavour to explain by an obvious inſtance.

We are taught in Scriptrue that *Chriſt is the Author of eternal ſalvation*. This propoſition is not in any degree *confuſed:* but it is extremely *general*. There are, who maintain that he effects our ſalvation by bringing us to repentance and obedience: there are, who contend, that he *makes* our repentance effectual to ſalvation. Thoſe who maintain the former opinion may either ſay that he ſaves us by his doctrine, or by his example; or they may impute the effect to his death, rather than his life, both as *compleating* the example, and *confirming* the doctrine.—Thoſe again who maintain the contrary opinion may either aſcribe our ſalvation to Chriſt's *active obedience*, or to his *ſufferings:* ſome of them may hold, that he was *puniſhed* for our offences; others that he is *rewarded* by our pardon, or (which is nearly the ſame thing) by the *authority* given him to confer pardon.—I have already enumerated on this head, I know not how many different opinions; and might ſtill increaſe the number by joining them together in various ways. Not to mention, that ſome

few

few ſincere Chriſtians may not dare to determine between the contending parties; and may doubt whether *any* or even *all* of them, be in poſſeſſion of the truth.—Yet all this variety has no effect at all on the general propoſition. Take which opinion you pleaſe, and it ſtill remains both *intelligible* and *true*, that Chriſt is the Author of eternal ſalvation. In this aſſertion there is no *ambiguity*. All that was *deſigned* to be conveyed by it is underſtood perfectly.

I perſuade myſelf, that this one inſtance is fully ſufficient to illuſtrate and ſupport the maxim laid down. I proceed therefore to another, namely,

III. That we cannot *believe* a propoſition to be *true*, when we *know* it to be *falſe*.

This indeed is almoſt too obvious to deſerve mention, I ſhall only repeat the words of Mr. Locke. "We can never receive for a truth any thing, that is directly contrary to our clear and diſtinct knowledge: ſince the evidence, 1ſt, That we deceive not ourſelves in aſcribing it to God; 2dly, That we underſtand

derſtand it right; can never be ſo great as the evidence of our own intuitive knowledge."

I have nothing to add to this plain paſſage, but a neceſſary *caution*. Every thing is not *knowledge*, in the philoſophical ſenſe of the word, which we are accuſtomed to *call* ſo. There muſt either be ſenſe, or intuition, or demonſtration; and the laſt of theſe is almoſt, if not altogether, confined to *mathematical* ſubjects. It might have been improper to omit this axiom intirely, as ſome writers have laid great ſtreſs on it: but it will be found perhaps on trial, much leſs important, than it has been generally believed.—I proceed therefore to a fourth obſervation, namely,

IV. That we cannot *believe* a propoſition to be true, which apparently ſubverts the *foundation* of our belief.

The *truth* of this maxim is ſelf-evident: the *uſe* and *application* of it may deſerve to be conſidered. The uſual motives to aſſent are experience and teſtimony. Whatever ſhould ſubvert theſe would tend to introduce univerſal Scepticiſm. But religious aſſent has

a foundation peculiar to itſelf; which it may be proper to lay open a little more diſtinctly.

The whole weight of our faith reſts on two pillars, miracles and prophecies. Supernatural power, or ſupernatural knowledge, employed in giving credit to a teacher of religion, affords a *certain* proof of the interpoſition of an *inviſible* being; and a very *probable* proof, as I before took notice, that the *Supreme* Being himſelf is the author of that religion. Yet, as we are ignorant of the capacities of ſubordinate agents, and equally ignorant of their diſpoſitions and characters, it *may* be, that ſome malevolent ſpirit abuſes the credulity of mankind. This ſuppoſition can never be effectually confuted without conſidering the nature and *tendency* of the religion itſelf: I do not ſay, the *truth* of it; for this would be to argue in a circle. But a religion evidently calculated to make men dutiful ſubjects to the great Lord of the Univerſe, and uſeful members of that vaſt community, in which we are all linked together by infinite wiſdom,—ſuch a religion, I ſay, carries the *marks* of its divine original. The *immediate* author of it may be a *ſubordinate* being:

being: but then he is doubtleſs one who acts under the *authority* of the Supreme.

1. Now, if this be a proper method of ſtating the evidence of religion, no propoſition which denies the *goodneſs* of God can be any object of faith. For it appears that *his* goodneſs is the very *foundation* of our faith. Take that away, and revealed religion has nothing to ſtand upon. Malevolent or capricious beings may be allowed at pleaſure to make inroads on this lower world, and to *ſport* themſelves with the weakneſs and ignorance of unhappy mortals.—What indeed would it avail, that our religion comes *immediately* from God, if he were a God that cared not for the happineſs of his creatures? An arbitrary, a malicious, a tyrannical being can no more be an object of faith, than he is of truſt or love. It is goodneſs only, which can, or ought to, engage either the *underſtanding* or the *heart*.

Let us be careful however, for there is *need* of care, that we do not *miſapply* this principle. We know that God intends the general good: but we are very incompetent

judges concerning the *means* of promoting it. On this we may ſecurely reſt, That virtue is the road to happineſs; and if an angel from heaven ſhould teach any other doctrine, we ought to reject him with *abhorrence*. But the particular ſteps, by which the race of human beings are to be made ſubſervient to the general ends of providence, are infinitely too difficult for our comprehenſion. We have nothing to do, but to admit the *facts*, which it has pleaſed God to communicate to us; and may wait perhaps till the *completion* of this grand ſcheme, before we diſtinctly view the relations of its ſeveral parts.

2. This conſideration will make it very difficult to apply *another* remark, which is undoubtedly *true*, and which falls under the ſame general head: I mean, that no propoſition can be an object of faith, which denies the *juſtice* of God. Juſtice, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, coincides with *truth*; of which I ſhall ſay ſomething hereafter: I only ſpeak here of *diſtributive* juſtice.—That God *is a rewarder of them* who *diligently ſeek him*, may well paſs for a fundamental article of faith. But *when*, or *where*, or in what *kind* and *degree*,

gree, or for what *continuance* — these sure are points, on which we can *pretend* to know nothing, without express, that is, supernatural revelation: and this ignorance almost destroys the *use* of the principle above-mentioned.

3. Nothing again can be received as an article of faith, which contradicts the *veracity*, or the *fidelity*, of God. For our trust in *these* attributes is the sole foundation of *all* the assent we do or can give to *any* revelation whatever. *This* is a principle, which can never *mislead* us. Truth is of a fixed and determinate nature. What God has said at *one* time, he cannot *unsay* at another; and when he binds himself by a *promise*, he cannot fail of *performance*. If then one revelation appear to contradict another, *both* cannot be, in the sense *we* understand them, from the Supreme Being. We are either mistaken in their origin or their interpretation: for God is invariably *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever**.

* Heb. xiii. 8.

The two laſt maxims were deſigned to prevent an enthuſiaſtic faith from incroaching on our reaſon: the two next are at leaſt equally neceſſary, to prevent a falſe philoſophy from ſubverting our faith.—Though we cannot *believe* what we *know* to be *falſe*; yet we *may* believe, on the teſtimony of another, what we ourſelves are *unable* to *prove*. Though we cannot believe a propoſition to be true which ſubverts the *foundation* of our belief; we may, nevertheleſs, in ſome caſes, admit the teſtimony of another, in ſeeming *oppoſition* to *experience*; the only ground on which teſtimony itſelf is believed.

V. *We certainly may* BELIEVE, *on the teſtimony of another, what we ourſelves are unable to* PROVE.

This is not more unreaſonable in religion than in common life; where it is, and *muſt* be, practiſed continually. It is indeed almoſt the *only* method, by which one man can learn the deſigns and diſpoſitions of another. A perſon's *general* character may be known from his conduct; but his *particular* determinations muſt be altogether uncertain, unleſs

leſs he himſelf think fit to communicate them. It is juſt thus with regard to the councils of God. General ideas of his Power, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, are derived from the ordinary courſe of nature: but in what manner theſe attributes, either *have* been exerted on occaſions which our experience does not reach, or *will* be exerted hereafter in ages to come——of this we can have no particular knowledge without expreſs revelation; without the report of *thoſe*, to whom God himſelf hath ſpoken. The only doubt is, whether God has *ever* revealed himſelf to mankind. If he have, it is evidently *our* part to *believe* as well as *obey*.

Doubts concerning the *reality* of a divine Revelation muſt always deſerve regard; becauſe they lead to a clearer and fuller eſtabliſhment of it. It is not my preſent purpoſe to enter into any diſcuſſion of the evidences of Chriſtianity: but we may in ſome meaſure prepare the *way* for their reception, by the *laſt* of thoſe maxims I before named, I mean,

VI. *That we may believe a propoſition to be*

true, on the teſtimony of others, in ſeeming OPPOSITION *to our own* EXPERIENCE.

Experience is, without doubt, the great inlet of human knowledge. Men of all claſſes, and on all occaſions, are fond of appealing to this teſt: and, if they do but *apply* it properly, they cannot have a plainer or ſurer guide. But this is by no means ſo eaſy a taſk, as is generally imagined. *Partial* experience is often miſtaken for *general*; *unlike* caſes are alleged as *parallel*; bare *ſucceſſion* is taken for *cauſality*: and a thouſand other miſtakes are committed every day, from ignorance of the principles, or inexperience in the practice, of reaſoning. Nor is there ever more danger of ſuch miſtakes, than on points of *religion*. In the common affairs of life common experience is ſufficient to direct us: it was the means *intended* for our direction. But will common experience ſerve to guide our judgment concerning the *fall* and *redemption* of mankind? From what we ſee every day, can we explain the *commencement*, or foretell the *diſſolution*, of the world? Or can we undertake to preſcribe to infinite wiſdom, at what time, and in what manner,

and

and by what ſteps, he ſhall convey the knowledge of *true religion* over the face of the whole earth? To judge of events like theſe, we ſhould be converſant in the hiſtory of other planets; ſhould know the nature, the circumſtances, the conduct of their ſeveral inhabitants; ſhould be diſtinctly informed of God's various diſpenſations to all the different orders of rational beings. Nothing leſs than this can be ſufficient to direct our inquiries on theſe nice and difficult ſubjects. — Inſtead then of grounding our religious opinions on what *we* call experience; let us apply to a more certain guide, let us hearken to the teſtimony of God himſelf. This teſtimony, both for the matter and the conveyance of it, is ſo very much unlike the ordinary occurrences of the world, as to be altogether unfit to be brought into compariſon with them. But the *evidence* on which we *receive* it, is of a kind frequent and familiar to us. The credibility of *human teſtimony*, and the conduct of *human agents*, are ſubjects perfectly within the reach of our natural faculties, and we ought to deſire no firmer foundation for our belief of religion, than for the judgments we form in the common affairs

of

of life: where we ſee a little plain teſtimony eaſily outweighs the moſt ſpecious conjectures: and not ſeldom even ſtrong probabilities. Nay let thoſe, who profeſs to depend on experience *only*, explain (if they can) on their *own* principle, by what means, and in what manner, the Chriſtian Religion was firſt introduced into the world. Let them weigh with attention the annals of antiquity, profane as well as ſacred; let them ſtudy the prejudices and paſſions of men; let them run over the hiſtory of fraud, of enthuſiaſm, of ſuperſtition: and, when they have done all this, we may challenge them to aſſign any imaginable ſuppoſition, concerning the origin of our religion, *leſs* contrary to experience of the moſt unexceptionable kind, than, what they uſually reject with ſo much diſdain, the *extraordinary* interpoſition of *heaven*.

The ſum of what has been ſaid amounts only to this, (which has often been ſaid before) that the truths of revelation may be *above* reaſon, but never *contrary* to it. I have only endeavoured to explain and limit this propoſition, ſo as to anſwer ſome common objections; and guard againſt ſome common miſtakes:

miſtakes: and I conclude upon the whole, that confuſed ideas, contradiction to evident truths, and ſubverſion of our rational faculties, make no part in the faith of a Chriſtian. But on the other hand, reaſon itſelf will direct us, not to reject *all* information, though of many things we are not informed: the trueſt philoſophy will require us to admit the teſtimony of others, as *one* method of information; and to be cautious how we oppoſe to a poſitive proof, perfectly underſtood, conjectures drawn from the analogy between caſes very difficult to be compared, and frequently beyond the reach of human faculties. —In all ſuch inſtances, He is the beſt *reaſoner*, who moſt willingly ſubmits to *authority*. He is the *wiſeſt* man, who, inſtead of permitting himſelf to wander in unknown paths, without either light to direct, or ſtrength to ſupport his ſteps, humbly and attentively liſtens to his guide, and follows, with patience and perſeverance, wherever he is called by the voice of HEAVEN.

CHARGE

CHARGE V.*

On SUBSCRIPTION to ARTICLES of RELIGION.

Delivered in the YEAR 1772.

Reverend BRETHREN,

THE late attack on our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment deſerves our moſt ſerious attention: not for the ſake of cenſuring our Adverſaries, much leſs of inſulting them on

* "To propoſe the *Amendment* of ſome particulars in the preſent Eſtabliſhment, in order to the making it more perfect, is what cannot well be complained of. But to propoſe a ſcheme, which cannot be admitted without the intire *Deſtruction* and total *Abolition* of the whole preſent Conſtitution, can end in no Good."

HOADLY.

their

their disappointment; but that we may satisfy ourselves, by a fair and impartial inquiry, whether truth and reason be with us, or against us, when we demand Subscription to Articles of Religion.

Let not this inquiry be confounded with another, of a quite different nature. It is one thing to *reform*, it is another thing to *abolish*, a National Church. Neither the truth, nor the importance, of the Articles of the Church of *England* is any way concerned in the present debate. The complaint made is *general*; the relief expected is not the Improvement of our *present* articles, but the Removal of *all*.—Nothing less will be *accepted* by the Petitioners, than an admission into the ministry and the preferments of the Church, without Subscription to any *human formulary* whatsoever.

They who understand the nature of their own petition, will readily agree with me, that the question between us amounts only to this,

WHE-

WHETHER it be fit for Government to employ and reward equally the Miniſters of *all* religions; or to ſupport *one* religion only, and tolerate the reſt*.

Let us examine the reaſons on both ſides.

I. If then the Magiſtrate ſupports, without diſtinction, every form of religion; we ſay, theſe three conſequences will be unavoidable.

1. He muſt ſupport *oppoſite* religions.
2. He muſt ſupport *hurtful* religions.
3. He muſt ſupport ſuch religions as are directly *ſubverſive of his own authority*.

* The late excellent Biſhop Hoadly, in his Reply to *Calamy*, p. 521, expreſſes himſelf thus,

"I am not aſhamed to own it as my judgment, that, "together with the moſt perfect *Eſtabliſhment* that can be "framed by man, there ought always to be a *Toleration* "and protection for ſuch weak and honeſt Chriſtians, as "are good and peaceable ſubjects to the Civil Conſtitution."

No wonder theſe two things are *joined together* by that great writer. An Eſtabliſhment without a Toleration is *unjuſt*: a Toleration without an Eſtabliſhment is *unintelligible*.

1. And

1. And what, you will ſay, is the harm of ſupporting *oppoſite* religions? I anſwer, in one word, univerſal Irreligion.—The opinions of the people are, and muſt be, founded more on authority than reaſon. Their parents, their teachers, their governors, in a great meaſure determine for them, what they are to believe, and what to practice. The ſame doctrines uniformly taught, the ſame rites conſtantly performed, make ſuch an impreſſion on their minds, that they heſitate as little in admitting the articles of their faith, as in receiving the moſt eſtabliſhed maxims of common life: and, whilſt they want the advantages of reflexion and ſtudy, they are at the ſame time free from the uneaſineſs and the miſchief of diſpute and doubt.

I would not be thought to prefer an implicit faith to a rational determination. I only deny the uſe of reaſon to the bulk of mankind, on religious ſubjects, becauſe they *cannot* uſe it: becauſe many of them want capacity, moſt of them opportunity, to think and judge for themſelves. They *muſt* be content, in all ordinary caſes, with that religion which chance has thrown in their way; becauſe

becauſe they *can* do no better. But let thoſe, who can, inquire: and let thoſe, who are capable of inſtruction, receive it. Every improvement in knowledge, eſpecially in religious knowledge, conduces to the increaſe of human happineſs.

Nor will this conceſſion in any degree interfere with the concluſion, which I wiſh to eſtabliſh: viz. That the ſupport of *oppoſite* religions tends to the deſtruction of *all* religion. Among men of learning and reflexion, a mutual communication of ſentiments, and even an accurate diſcuſſion of conteſted points, may be uſeful and neceſſary. Let the Preſs be open for ſuch uſes: and let it be open, as far as will conſiſt with the public ſafety, even to thoſe who abuſe it; for, in ſuch caſes, the uſe and abuſe cannot well be ſeparated. But let not the Pulpit be made a ſtage of controverſy: let not good men, who come together to receive religious inſtruction, be perplexed and diſquieted with the doubts, and cavils, and endleſs contradictions, of religious diſputants: and, above all, let them not be exaſperated againſt each other, as may well be expected in ſuch diſputes, by that moſt malignant

malignant among human paſſions, Zeal without Knowledge.

Nothing is clearer, than that the *uniform appearance* of religion is the cauſe of its general and eaſy reception. Deſtroy this uniformity, and you cannot but introduce doubt and perplexity into the minds of the people. When they hear, in the ſame town, perhaps in the ſame church, the moſt irreconcileable contradiction of doctrine: when they are told, ſuppoſe, in the morning, that Chriſt came down from heaven, that he died for the ſins of the world, that he has ſent his Holy Spirit to aſſiſt and comfort us; and are told in the afternoon, that he did *not* come down from heaven, that he did *not* die for the ſins of the world, that he did *not* ſend his Holy Spirit to aſſiſt us: what muſt they, what *can* they think? Would you have them think for themſelves? Would you have them hear and decide the controverſies of the learned? Would you have them enter into the depths of criticiſm, of logic, of ſcholaſtic divinity? You might as well expect them to compute an eclipſe, or to decide between the Carteſian and Newtonian philoſophy. Nay I will go

farther: for I take upon me to ſay, there are *more* men capable, in ſome competent degree, of underſtanding Newton's Philoſophy, than of forming any judgment at all concerning the abſtruſer queſtions in metaphyſics and theology.

If it ſhould be thought that I am here offering a defence of *Popery*, it would only be too candid an interpretation. I mean to defend not Popery only, but *Paganiſm* itſelf. I mean to defend *every* eſtabliſhed religion under heaven. The *leaſt* defenſible cannot be worſe then downright Atheiſm. Reſtraints, though miſapplied, are ſtill reſtraints: and it is better to act *wrong* on a principle of conſcience, than to have *no* conſcience at all.—In general, we may ſafely aſſert, that religion, even falſe religion, is the great bond of human ſociety: that every civilized nation, in every age, has ſeen and felt the benefit of it, under all the miſtakes and corruptions which have overſpread the world: and that *contradictory* religions, equally favoured by the magiſtrate (if it were poſſible for ſo abſurd a conſtitution to remain for any conſiderable time in any country) muſt of neceſſity deſtroy

ſtroy *all* religious principle and end in the ruin of the ſtate itſelf *.

I muſt however do our adverſaries the juſtice to ſay, that I do not believe them to have acted with any ſuch intention. Many of them, we may ſuppoſe, did not ſee ſo far. They, who did, ſaw *farther:* they ſaw and knew, that, after a ſhort conflict of parties, ſome one of them would remain ſuperior to the reſt; and they hoped perhaps, that their *own* ſyſtem would have this pre-eminence. Juſt as they who overturn a civil eſtabliſhment intend *not* a ſtate of anarchy, but a change of dominion.

2. Thus far we might have gone in ſupport of an eſtabliſhed religion, even if it could be ſuppoſed that every form of religion was equally advantageous to the ſtate. But

* Let it not be ſuppoſed that the principles here maintained will preclude all *change* of religion, even under the ordinary courſe of God's Providence, and ſtill leſs in the caſe of ſupernatural interpoſition. Corruptions *may* become ſo great, and be ſo ſenſibly felt, as to give juſt cauſe for overturning an old eſtabliſhment, and erecting a new one on its ruins. But the preſent queſtion is, Are we to have *any* eſtabliſhment or *none?*

ſurely this is not the caſe. I have ſaid, and I repeat it, that the *worſt* is better than *none*. But I have not ſaid, that the choice of religion is a matter of *indifference*. It has indeed been maintained by ſome of our ableſt writers *, that the magiſtrate has no concern in the truth or falſhood of the doctrines he eſtabliſhes: but undoubtedly he is concerned to eſtabliſh *ſuch* doctrines, as will beſt promote the peace and ſafety and happineſs of his ſubjects.

Now there *are* religions, in which the benefit promiſed to ſociety is almoſt equally balanced by the miſchief. There *are* religions, which demand human ſacrifices, as an atonement for guilt. There *are*, which allow and authorize the moſt infamous proſtitution. There *are*, which by making ſenſual pleaſures the reward of piety and virtue, debaſe and corrupt the minds of men in the very attempt to reform them.

I aſk then, Whether the miniſters of *ſuch* religions ought to be employed and rewarded

* *Locke* and *Warburton*.

by

by a wiſe magiſtrate: whether *Jupiter* and *Mahomet* ought to have public honours aſſigned them (even in a Chriſtian country) on a principle of common equity, and out of a tender regard to the right of pivate judgment.

There is not, I ſuppoſe, one ſingle petitioner, who will carry his claim to ſuch a length of extravagance as this. Yet whoever among them ſtops *ſhort* of this, fairly gives up the point in debate. If Pagans and Mahometans are to be kept out of the public miniſtry, the queſtion between us is quite changed. We are no longer to inquire, Whether honeſt men may be excluded from preferment on account of their opinions; but, what opinions ſhall be ſufficient to exclude them.

I will not however take advantage of this inconſiſtency: I will ſuppoſe that our Adverſaries, without departing from their principles, can juſtify themſelves in confining eccleſiaſtical preferments to the church of Chriſt. Still the argument alleged remains in its full force. For what was once ſaid of

Philoſophy may, with too much truth, be applied to Chriſtianity. It is ſcarce poſſible to name, or to invent an opinion more abſurd in itſelf, or more hurtful to ſociety, or more fatal to the cauſe of piety and virtue, than many of thoſe which have actually been maintained, by men, who *called* themſelves Chriſtians.

To ſay nothing of the follies of paſt ages, there *are* Chriſtians, at this day, who think to merit heaven, by ſecluding themſelves from all the offices of civil life, and burthening the world with a painful and uſeleſs exiſtence; uſeleſs even to the great purpoſe of nature, the perpetuity of the human ſpecies: who eagerly ſubſtitute all the fooleries of ſuperſtition, in the place of real and ſubſtantial piety: and, what is worſt of all, who hold it lawful to propagate their own opinions by fraud, by perfidy, by aſſaſſination; and think they ſhall even atone for ſmaller crimes by the moſt outrageous acts of violence and perſecution.

We are told indeed by our adverſaries, that they have no thoughts at all of giving an entrance

entrance to *Popery:* and I believe they ſpeak ſincerely. But the queſtion is, do they ſpeak *conſiſtently?* They can have no better reaſon for excluding the Jeſuits themſelves from the higheſt offices in the church, than a juſt apprehenſion, that the principles and practices of the Jeſuits would be injurious to ſociety. And are there *no* doctrines to be found, even in Chriſtian churches, injurious to ſociety, except the doctrines of Popery? It would be ſtrange indeed, if the *Romiſh* Church ſhould have contrived to *monopolize* all manner of opinions that can juſtly give offence to the magiſtrate, and to confine miſchief of every kind within the circle of its own communion! It ſhould *ſeem*, on the contrary, that they who deny the neceſſity of good works are at leaſt as dangerous as they who maintain the merit of them. It ſhould ſeem that they, if ſuch there be, ſhould, at all events, be excluded from our miniſtry, who have contrived to make the gratification of their luſts and paſſions a part of their religion.

You ſee then, we are under a neceſſity of excluding not only *Pagans* and *Mahometans*, but alſo *Catholics:* not only *Catholics*, but

Antinomians; and, if they are not traduced, *Moravians* alſo. I will not ſay, nor do I need to ſay, that *Palagians* and *Socinians* may be excluded on the ſame principle. It is ſufficient for my purpoſe, that I have ſhewn the neceſſity of making a diſtinction between one religion and another: that I have ſhewn the abſurdity (our enemies themſelves being judges) of giving equal encouragement to *every* ſect, that bears the name of Chriſtian. Whether we ſhould admit the *Racovian Catechiſm* on the one hand, or the *Confeſſion of Augsburg* on the other; whether we ſhould profit by the example of our brethren in *North Britain*, or be content after all with the xxxix Articles of the Church of *England*; and laſtly, whether theſe articles ſhould be preſerved *intire*, or made ſubject to *reviſal* and *correction*: theſe are queſtions, which it will be time enough to conſider, when our adverſaries ſhall be brought to confeſs, that *ſome* articles of faith are abſolutely neceſſary for the ſupport of religion and the welfare of ſociety.

3. It is not only, that doctrines called religious are, in ſome inſtances, deſtructive of

private

private virtue: many of them tend directly to the ſubverſion of *civil authority.* For the truth of this poſition I might ſafely refer to the hiſtory of almoſt twelve centuries. The principles and the practices of the church of *Rome* would furniſh an ample field of diſcourſe. But I will confine myſelf within a narrow compaſs. Even *reformed* religion, through the folly of ſome, and the knavery of others, has too often proved fatal to the power of the ſtate. Will our adverſaries require me to deſcend to particulars? Is it poſſible they ſhould be ignorant of the numerous ſects of Proteſtants, which diſhonoured for a time the glorious work of Reformation? What think they of the Anabaptiſts in *Germany?* of their follies, their crimes, their cruelties? Or, not to trouble them with foreign inſtances, what do they think of thoſe ſwarms of ſectaries, which once overſpread this unhappy kingdom; and which appear even now to have ſome remains of life and motion*? Have they forgot

* The author has no intention, in this paſſage, of cenſuring any ſect of Diſſenters, whoſe principles are conſiſtent with the duties of citizens, and ſubjects. He freely owns,

forgot the men, who dared to aſſert, that no Chriſtian has a property in his goods? Have they forgot the men, who denied the lawfulneſs of oaths, even for the moſt eſſential intereſts of ſociety? Shall the magiſtrate *reward* the profeſſors of a religion, which forbids us to fight, and to die, for our country? Or ſhall he truſt *thoſe* perſons with any important employment, who, after a free and full uſe of the right of *private judgment*, are come at laſt to this concluſion, that there is *no King* but *King Jeſus*?

Such were once the bleſſed effects, which ſprung from the ruin of the *Engliſh* church! Effects ſo totally inconſiſtent with the public ſecurity, that even our ſectaries themſelves were made to feel the neceſſity of bridling one another.—And give me leave to add, for the occaſion naturally ſuggeſts it, that *religious* wars, as well as *civil*, very frequently end in

owns, he can diſcern no ſhadow of reaſon for refuſing to *ſuch* perſons (however diſqualified for the public miniſtry) a full and legal *ſecurity* for the exerciſe of their religion: though at the ſame time he cannot but add, in the words of Biſhop Hoadly, that a *more extended Uniformity* might juſtly be thought *an advantage to a Chriſtian nation.*

the

the deſtruction of that liberty, which they were deſigned to enlarge.

I have touched very ſlightly upon this part of my ſubject. I meant to do no more. But I muſt not omit to take notice of one *general* principle, which has too often inſinuated itſelf into the minds of Proteſtants as well as Papiſts; and which is abſolutely deſtructive of the peace of ſociety. The principle I mean is that of the independence of the church upon the ſtate. Every one knows the prevalence of this tenet in the church of *Rome:* the wars, the murders, the miſeries it has produced, for a ſucceſſion of ages. If then there *be* Proteſtants (under whatever denomination) who maintain the ſame doctrine; it highly concerns the magiſtrate to be upon his guard againſt them, and to uſe all poſſible means of excluding them from every office of truſt, whether in church or ſtate.

I mean not however to ſtate preciſely, in this or any other inſtance, the *particular* opinions which ought to exclude men from the miniſtry. I only ſay, that *all* forms of religion are not to be favoured *equally* by the civil

civil magiſtrate. To *what* forms the preference is due, He only is the proper judge. He is equally a judge of the evidence, by which the opinions of men are to be known. But as, in many caſes, theſe opinions may not be immediately diſcoverable from *actions*, it ſeems to follow that they ought to be openly declared in ſome public and authorized form of *words*. The ſubſcription of men's names is, or ought to be, the teſt of their doctrines *.

II. I hope

* It is a ſtrange way of ſpeaking, but much in uſe among writers of a certain claſs, that articles of faith ought not to be *impoſed*, or (as they ſometimes expreſs it) ought not to be *bound upon men's conſciences*, by human authority. To what purpoſe is this ſo often repeated by them, in a nation which (in *their* ſenſe of the word) impoſes *no articles at all?* In this kingdom, neither church nor ſtate claims any *authority* over conſcience. The ſtate obliges no man either to *believe* our articles, or to *profeſs* his belief of them; only they who diſſent are thought *unqualified* for the public ſervice: and as for the church, it is expreſsly declared in the articles themſelves, both that ſhe ought not to decree any thing *againſt* Holy Writ, and that, *beſides the ſame*, ſhe ought not *to enforce any thing to be believed, for neceſſity of ſalvation*. Art. 20.—But ſome perſons care not to diſtinguiſh between terms of *ſalvation*, and terms of *admiſſion to the miniſtry*. The following paſſage, from Clarke's Reply to Nelſon, p. 32. will perhaps give them a juſter idea of the nature and end of ſubſcription.

" Parti-

II. I hope this general repreſentation of our caſe may be almoſt ſufficient to obviate the objections againſt us. It will be eaſy at leaſt to point out, in a few inſtances, the frivolouſneſs or impertinence of the main reaſons, which have been alleged by our adverſaries, in ſupport of their late application to Parliament †. All of them, I think, may be reduced to three head: viz. that the laws which require ſubſcription are *unjuſt*, *inexpedient*, *unneceſſary*.

1. The *firſt* of theſe objections will be ſoon diſpatched. It is grounded only on what the objectors call the *unalienable* right of private judgment. If we were not accuſtomed to this expreſſion, we ſhould certainly ſuſpect ſome miſtake. It is not *private judg-*

" Particular churches require men's aſſent to, and uſe " of, certain forms of words, not as the *rule of their faith*, " but as *prudential means of uniformity*, and of preventing " diſorder and confuſion among themſelves."

† The objections here conſidered are chiefly taken from a printed paper, diſperſed among the members and others, ſome time before the laſt meeting of Parliament. This paper appears to expreſs the ſentiments of the party, both more properly and more fully than the petition itſelf.

ment,

ment, but *public promotion*, which theſe men demand, and from which *only* we wiſh to exclude them. Let them think as they will, or rather as they *can*: but it does not follow that they muſt be allowed to *teach*. Nay, I had almoſt ſaid, let them teach as they will; provided they will be content with the *voluntary* contributions of their hearers. On this condition, I can ſcarce forbear wiſhing them the moſt unbounded liberty *. But ſurely it can be no injuſtice in the magiſtrate, to appoint *thoſe only* for public teachers, whom *he* thinks qualified for the office. If he depute others to *judge* of thoſe qualifications; if he give them a *rule* to direct their judgement: if this rule *exclude* from employment all who reject certain received opinions: he may be thought perhaps by ſome to act *unwiſely*; but there can be no pretence for ſaying that he acts *injuriouſly*.

2. The *inexpedience* of the laws requiring ſubſcription is ſupported by a variety of aſſer-

* The very few reſtraints which can reaſonably be laid on unauthorized teachers, may be gathered from *Locke*'s firſt Letter on Toleration, compared with the Alliance between Church and State, p. 35.—See alſo Charge III.

tion:

tions: but many of them falſe; moſt of them foreign to the queſtion in debate. It is *not true*, that we elevate human authority to a level with divine; or that ſubſcription to articles *precludes the uſe of arguments from ſacred writ* againſt *the enemies of revelation*. With what face can this be affirmed by thoſe, who know that the beſt defenders of Chriſtianity, and the beſt expounders of the ſacred writings, are to be found in the boſom of the church of *England?*——It is *foreign to the purpoſe*, when we are ſpeaking of eſtabliſhments in general, to ſuggeſt that our preſent articles *impoſe* upon us *the doctrines of dark and ignorant ages*. Otherwiſe indeed one might be tempted to aſk the objectors, of *what* ages they ſpeak. I hope they do *not* ſpeak of the times of the reformation. The age of *Ridley*, and *Jewell*, and *Hooker*, will be reverenced by the lateſt poſterity. — But, in truth, this complaint of our adverſaries has no relation at all to the preſent ſubject. For there is no kind of neceſſity that the inventions of dark and ignorant ages ſhould be peculiarly acceptable to the *civil magiſtrate*; in whoſe power it is to appoint, to reviſe,

viſe, to reform, whatever, and whenever, he ſees fit.

One thing, it muſt be owned, they ſay with too much truth; viz. that ſubſcription expoſes us to the *charge of inſincerity:* and they themſelves have taken care to heighten this charge beyond all bounds: ſometimes by complimenting others on their ſuppoſed incredulity, ſometimes by confeſſing it in themſelves; by confeſſing, in effect, that they ſubſcribe for prudential reaſons, againſt the dictates of their conſcience.—The miſchief is conſiderable, no doubt: but it is, in a great degree, *unavoidable.* The objection may be made with equal force againſt every poſſible teſt of human opinions and actions.

Almoſt the ſame anſwer may be given to another objection, drawn from the *inhumanity* of excluding men from the miniſtry, who have ſpent their time and their fortune in preparing for it; and cannot now enter with advantage into any other profeſſion.—The caſe alleged is truly a caſe of compaſſion: but it

it is a caſe, which admits of no remedy *. Would the objectors themſelves pay any regard to this plea, if urged in favour of a profeſſed *Roman Catholic?* I am certain, they would not. Accidental inconveniencies will ever ariſe from all general rules; yet rules *muſt* be made, and muſt be obſerved: and the advantage of particulars muſt ever give way, when it ſtands in competition with the public ſafety.

3. It is true indeed, the inconveniencies alleged both might be, and ought to be, avoided, if there were any force in the laſt objection I mentioned, viz. that ſubſcription is *unneceſſary*. The ſecurity of the ſtate,

* The reader will remember that it is not any particular eſtabliſhment, which is here defended, but eſtabliſhments in general. Doubtleſs the inconveniencies of ſubſcription ought not to be aggravated, by multiplying articles without neceſſity. But then great regard muſt be had to the circumſtances of the *times:* and great regard *was* had by the compilers of our preſent articles. In general, it cannot reaſonably be denied, "That the *wider the bottom is* "*made* (conſiſtent with the Peace of Society, and the Be-"ing of a Chriſtian Church,) *the wiſer and juſter is that* "*religious inſtitution.*§"—But this inquiry is foreign to our preſent purpoſe.

§ Warburton.

we are told, *is already provided for by the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance:* and the ſecurity of the church by *declarations of attachment to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, as contained in the Scriptures.*

But, if it be allowed that *oaths*, of whatever kind, are lawful and neceſſary, the difficulty is ſhifted only, not removed. For *theſe* too may expoſe us to *the charge of inſincerity:* theſe too may be the occaſion of great hardſhips to worthy and conſcientious men. ——Many of us may remember the time; when even the oath of *Allegiance* was conſidered as an arbitrary impoſition; and when as much artifice was uſed to explain it away, as our adverſaries may have found it neceſſary to employ on the moſt intractable of the xxxix Articles.

Perhaps indeed it may be ſaid, that *political*, not *religious*, teſts, are fit to be employed in the ſervice of the ſtate: that the miſchiefs ariſing even from thoſe are greatly to be lamented, though they cannot be removed: and that we are by no means to create freſh difficulties, and new occaſions of ſcandal, by

by requiring men to admit a ſyſtem of *ſpeculative opinions*, with which the magiſtrate has no concern *.—But now, not to mention the extreme

* It ſeems to have been the original deſign of the petitioners to ſhake off ſubſcription of *every kind*: the aſſent required to the *Liturgy* being liable to many of the ſame objections, with that to the *Articles*. But perhaps they thought it improper, on better conſideration, to attempt too much *at one time*. Otherwiſe indeed they ought to have gone ſtill farther: they ought not only to have condemned *ſubſcription* to the Liturgy, but the *Liturgy itſelf*. Nay they ought to have rejected *all* human forms without diſtinction: unleſs at leaſt the *uſe* of theſe forms were left to the *diſcretion* of every ſingle miniſter. For might they not urge, that the very IMPOSITION of a FORMULARY, whether of *faith* or *worſhip*, drawn up by fallible men, is an uſurpation on the rights of conſcience—excludes many excellent perſons from the public ſervice—lays many others under temptations to inſincerity—and brings diſgrace and ſcandal upon All?—It follows, that the miniſters of a *Proteſtant Church* are either to be left *intirely* at liberty, or confined at moſt to the very *words* of *Scripture*, in which all Chriſtians are agreed!

But what then ſhall we gain by the ſcrupulous attention of the *candid diſquiſitors*, and other reſpectable perſons; who have been labouring to *correct* our Public Forms, inſtead of *blotting out*, at one ſtroke, every Ordinance of Man?

Whatever merit our adverſaries may take to themſelves on the boldneſs of this attempt, we cannot allow them the praiſe of *invention*. They have fairly brought us back, *in*

extreme difficulty of diſtinguiſhing, in a variety of caſes, between political principles and religious; not to mention, that the oath of *Supremacy* is itſelf a religious Teſt; I would only aſk theſe few plain queſtions: will the oaths of ſupremacy and allegiance, without any other proviſion, ſecure the uniformity of the public religion? will they reſtrain the teachers of hurtful doctrines? will they even be ſufficient to exclude from our churches the men who would ſet up an eccleſiaſtical kingdom in the midſt of the civil, and require their Sovereign, in return for the allegiance they pay him, to bend the knee to their ſpiritual deciſions? The doctrines and the men, here intended, are called perhaps *Proteſtant*, not *Popiſh*. But in this caſe I make no diſtinction. Whether it be Pope or Council; Biſhops or Preſbyters: whether it be the pride of philoſophy, or the folly of ſuperſtition, or the madneſs of enthuſiaſm: whoever, or whatever, it be, that rivals the authority of the magiſtrate,

this enlightened age, to the ſame point from which their anceſtors ſet out in the reign of *Q. Elizabeth*; and all the labours of *Hooker*, and *Stillingfleet*, and *Hoadly*, are ſlighted and forgotten.

may

may and must be restrained from doing public mischief. Till then the objectors can shew, that no contrariety of opinion, no malignity of doctrine, no contempt of human authority, will ever disturb the peace of the community, all they can do beside will be insignificant and vain.

Nor will the church be satisfied more easily than the state. Subscription to the Scriptures is absolutely *nothing*. It is consistent with every imaginable absurdity and mischief: and it is not even free from the smallest of those objections, which, with so much tragical declamation, have been pressed and inculcated upon the ear of the public.

Protestant churches, it seems, can demand no more. Whereas there is not a dissenting congregation in the whole kingdom, which will be content with so little: not one, that would employ an instructor, whom *they* think impious and heretical; however he may pretend to support his opinions by express passages from holy Scripture. Yet even *this* demand, small as it may seem, on the principles of our adversaries, is *too much*.

The number of Canonical Books, the integrity of each, the degree of inſpiration, are points on which honeſt men *may* poſſibly differ. And, if they do, how ſhall they all ſubſcribe to the truth of the Scriptures? Not, moſt certainly, in the ſame ſenſe, and in the ſame extent, with each other. What then becomes of the ſacred right of *private judgment?* How ſhall we eſcape the imputation of *inſincerity?* Why ſhould we be tied down, eſpecially in matters of criticiſm, by the judgment of *dark and ignorant ages?*

In whatever light this ſubject is viewed, it will evidently appear, that *ſome* articles of religion (I ſpeak of *human* articles) *muſt* be preſcribed by public authority. Indeed our adverſaries themſelves *are willing to afford any further proof of their abhorrence of the Antichriſtian power and ſpirit of Popery, which the legiſlature ſhall think proper to require.*— The misfortune is, that, in making this conceſſion, they give up their pretended principles, and diſcover their true. They will allow, it ſeems, the magiſtrate to exclude *ſome* forms of religion from his protection and

and favour: but *they* muſt determine, *what* forms are fit to be excluded; and they wiſh to exclude *none but Popery*.—Perhaps, if this were granted them, we might ſoon find the number of *Popiſh* doctrines conſiderably increaſed. For, after all, the tenets of the church of *Rome* are neither all true, nor all falſe: and the magiſtrate ſhould be well adviſed, when he attempts to make a diſtinction between them. If he ſhall ever think fit to conſult theſe modern reformers, I know not whether the *Trinitarian* doctrine, for inſtance, will be eſteemed by them Catholic or Proteſtant. I ſuſpect, they will not be quite content, that the followers of *Athanaſius* ſhould remain miniſters of the *Engliſh* Church. I can ſcarce think, they will chuſe to be *joined* with them in the care of the ſame congregations. I am confident, they may moſt of them be brought to endure the *requiſition of a ſubſcription* to this capital article, "God the Father is the only true "God."—He who can lay his hand on his heart, and ſolemnly deny the truth of this ſuggeſtion; he who is content to leave to others the ſame liberty which he claims for

himſelf; muſt be allowed at leaſt to be a *conſiſtent* oppoſer: and, however we may diſpute the truth of his opinions, we cannot reaſonably diſtruſt the ſincerity of his profeſſions, or queſtion the integrity of his conduct.

CHARGE VI.

On the true Value of FAITH and MORALS.

Reverend BRETHREN,

CONSIDERING the vaſt importance of religious knowledge, and the univerſal extent of religious obligations, it muſt appear very ſtrange to a careful obſerver, that ſo much miſtake, and ſo little certainty, have attended the ſtudy of religion. Neither reaſon nor faith has proved ſufficient to direct us. The infirmities, the prejudices, the paſſions, of humanity have either obſtructed men in their courſe, or diverted their attention to wrong objects.

Some-

Something perhaps might be done towards keeping us ſteady in the right road, if ſome general principles could be held out to our view, on which, we might always keep our eyes fixed, and to which on every occaſion of doubt and difficulty, we might conſtantly repair. Two of theſe principles I have ſelected for your preſent conſideration. If I am right in the choice and the application of them, they will free us from a great deal of uſeleſs labour; and, by diſengaging us from frivolous purſuits, will give room and leiſure for our improvement in ſolid piety. They will free us alſo from a thouſand fears and ſcruples; and leave us to the pure enjoyment of *that* ſhare of happineſs, which it is allowed us to enjoy in our preſent condition of being.

In our purſuit after religious knowledge there are but two objects of inquiry; what we are to *believe*, and what we are to *do*: and we ſhall purſue *both* theſe inquiries with the greater probability of ſucceſs, if we clearly diſcern the *reaſons* for inquiring at all. Of what *importance* is it to men and to Chriſtians to believe and do what they ought? —I anſwer,

I. The

I. The importance of FAITH ariſes from its influence on our *Actions*; and,

II. The importance of ACTIONS from their influence on the general *Happineſs*.—— Faith without works, we know is *dead**: and ſurely we may add, that works of unmeaning ceremony, or uſeleſs auſterity, are dead alſo.

I.

1. The foundation of all religion is laid in the belief of a GOD. On the *importance*, as well as the *truth*, of this article all ſects and parties are agreed. — On what now is their agreement founded? Evidently on this, that, without the belief of a ſupreme Governor, men will, in many inſtances of the utmoſt conſequence, have *no law* to direct their actions: every one may do what is right in his own eyes, without fear of inſpection or puniſhment. The crime then of *Atheiſm* conſiſts in this, that it ſubverts *morality*.

But perhaps you may think there is ſomething *more* in the matter. You may be

* James ii. 17.

ſhocked

ſhocked with the *impiety* of denying *his* exiſtence, who is the Parent of all Good. Well indeed may you be ſhocked not only with the impiety, but the *abſurdity* of it. You may juſtly impute ſo flagrant an abuſe of reaſon to ſome lurking principle of an immoral nature and tendency. You may juſtly expect a *ſimilar* abuſe in the common offices of life: and you may well ſuppoſe, that a heart which has hardened itſelf againſt all impreſſions of gratitude to God, will be equally inſenſible of *human* kindneſs; and that all the charities of neighbourhood, and kindred, and friendſhip will be ſunk and ſtifled in a cool, philoſophical, ſelfiſhneſs.

Were we only to conſider the Supreme Being as the *Author* and *Preſerver* of the univerſe, *without* any apprehenſion of his *moral* government: even *this* conſideration might have *ſome* effect in raiſing our thoughts from earth to heaven; and the *want* of it muſt have a natural tendency to ſink and degrade human nature. —— It muſt be owned however, that the idea of a God, if carried no farther than this, could not be expected to make any deep impreſſion on our minds;

minds; or to have any powerful influence on the conduct of our lives. But a Supreme *Governor* and *Judge* is indeed an awful and moſt important object. Not only the ſentiments of reverence and gratitude will make us wiſh to recommend ourſelves to his favour, but we ſhall be yet more forcibly impelled by the fear of his diſpleaſure.

It has been debated among philoſophers, whether Atheiſm or Superſtition be the greater offence againſt God. Without entering into this debate, I ſhall only obſerve at preſent, that it has uſually been conducted on wrong *principles*. "I had rather, ſays a great Antient (and Lord *Bacon* follows him) that men ſhould deny there was any ſuch man as *Plutarch*, than that they ſhould affirm him to be capricious and cruel. Superſtition therefore, which *diſhonours* the gods, is worſe than Atheiſm, which only *denies* their exiſtence." — As if the malignity of human opinions were to be meaſured by the *affront* that is paid to the Divinity! Alas! It is nothing to HIM, whether the wickedneſs and folly of poor mortals breaks out in one ſhape or another. The *higheſt* offence they

they can poſſibly commit againſt him, is to hurt *themſelves:* to deform and lay waſte the *works* of his creation.

2. I paſs on to another article of religion, which appears to me to have no other importance, than as it is intimately connected with the conduct of our lives: I mean, the UNITY of GOD. — The Heathen Polytheiſm ſet up a *divided* empire in the univerſe. If ſome ſort of ſupremacy was allowed to the father of gods and men, it was not enough to prevent a very active oppoſition from his children and ſubjects. And, as every Pagan Divinity had a character peculiar to himſelf, no *one* courſe of human conduct could be acceptable to *all*. He who pleaſes one, muſt diſpleaſe another: and the *apprehenſion* of ſuch diſpleaſure muſt often have diſtracted the counſels, and excited the fears, of their ſeveral votaries.

But this was not the worſt. The characters of the Pagan divinities were *immoral*. Their examples could only ſerve to *juſtify* vice; and their authority was employed, on many occaſions, in *recommending* and ſupporting

porting it. It is clear then, that a Polytheiſm like this, however adorned and embelliſhed with the elegant magnificence of *Greece* and *Rome*, muſt have been *fatal* to virtue. It is *unqueſtionably* true, that the religion of the *Jews*, which taught the belief of *one God only*, in oppoſition to all this rabble of deities, taught a very *important* article of faith.

But it may *ſeem* perhaps, that it was not *ſo* taught. It may ſeem that both Polytheiſm and Idolatry were conſidered by the *Jewiſh* Law-giver rather as offences againſt *God himſelf*, than as influencing men's conduct in *ſociety*. He is continually repreſented in in Scripture, as a *jealous* God; as one, that *will not give* his *glory to another*. How then are theſe expreſſions to be underſtood? I anſwer juſt in the ſame manner, as thoſe *other* paſſages in Holy Writ, where God is ſaid to have *eyes*, and *hands*; to be *angry*; to *repent*: all which is ſpoken only in accommodation to the infirmity of human reaſon.

For is it poſſible, that the Supreme Being, infinitely removed above all created excellence,

lence, ſhould receive any *real* addition of glory, from the opinions of *men?* from the ſervice and adoration of mere *worms* and *inſects?* It cannot be. For *our* ſakes only, was the command given, *Thou ſhalt have none other gods but me.*

Cicero, in cenſuring the poetical mythology, uſes this remarkable expreſſion, *Humana ad Deos transferunt:* and he has been followed in it by ſeveral of the later philoſophers. I fear this remark may be applied to Chriſtian divines, as well as Heathen poets. We ſeem to conſider the Deity as of like paſſions with ourſelves; and to be more afraid of offending him by a failure of reſpect to his Perſon, than by diſobedience to his laws. Theſe unworthy apprehenſions of the Supreme Being have occaſioned much uſeleſs diſquiet to ourſelves and others. An imaginary importance has been given to various doctrines, which have no very evident connection with the great ends of human life: and the oppoſite errors have been conſidered as blaſphemous impieties, though conſiſtent perhaps with a regular and conſcientious diſcharge of all the duties of ſociety.

2. The

3. The doctrine of a FUTURE STATE, which ſeems to come next in order, is of ſuch great and obvious importance, that little need to be ſaid on *that* ſubject. We ſee, we feel, the imperfection of God's *preſent* adminiſtration. Nothing therefore could ſupport us in a ſteady and uniform courſe of virtue, but the proſpect of a *life to come*. An awful, and yet a pleaſing, proſpect! Well may *they* be called *the peſts of ſociety* (they have, ſome of them, pronounced their own ſentence) who endeavour to deprive morality of this beſt, this firmeſt, ſupport.

4. Nor is our belief and reception of the GOSPEL DISPENSATION leſs connected with life and manners, than our knowlege of *Natural Religion*. The doctrine of *Pardon* to repenting ſinners, the expreſs promiſe of *Immortality*, and the *Terrors* denounced againſt evil-doers, theſe are things, which have an obvious and powerful influence, in drawing men off from a life of ſin and folly, and confirming them in habits of piety and goodneſs. — Even the doctrines of *Incarnation* and *Redemption* are not without their *practical* uſes. How little ſoever we ſee, or *can*

ſee, into the ends and reaſons of theſe divine diſpenſations, they ſhew us *one thing* clearly, and that of the *utmoſt* importance, the inconceivable hazard we run in all ſinful courſes.—We are apt to conſider the criminal indulgence of our paſſions, as a matter of ſlight aud frivolous concern. But our religion will teach us to think of it more deeply. The wonderful means employed by providence, to reſcue us from ſin and death, plainly point out the *extreme* difficulty of the caſe; and may inſpire us, more than a thouſand arguments, with a juſt apprehenſion, and *feeling*, of the deſperate folly and danger of all moral evil.

II.

This obſervation will lead us to the ſecond principle I have advanced; namely, that the importance of human actions ariſes from their influence on the *general happineſs*: not, by any means, *excluding* the happineſs of the Agent himſelf.—This propoſition is to be *applied* indeed with caution: but, as it ſeems to me, admits of no real exception.

Obedi-

Obedience to God, where his will is clearly revealed, cannot, in any inſtance, be a matter of indifference. Yet it *may* happen, (and in the *Jewiſh* Ritual it muſt have happened *frequently*) that the *reaſons* of a divine inſtitution do not *appear*: that it may *ſeem* to have no imaginable connexion with the good of the agent, or of mankind. This however implies *no contradiction* to the maxim propoſed. For an habitual obedience to the wiſeſt and beſt of Beings, as it is evidently a branch of moral duty, ſo it is of the utmoſt importance both to our virtue and our happineſs.

Were we eſtimating the *probabilities*, on either ſide, of a pretended commiſſion from heaven, the ſeeming *inſignificance* of doctrines or duties would be a ſtrong preſumption againſt them. But, where their divine origin is *already* aſcertained, the argument lies the other way. They are *not* inſignificant, *becauſe* they come from God.

In *human* inſtitutions the caſe is widely different. All rules of conduct which do neither good nor harm, do nothing. It is

childiſhneſs to *require* obedience: it is ſtubbornneſs to *refuſe* it. Only it ſhould be remembered, that the moſt trifling obſervances may ſometimes be *multiplied* to ſuch a degree as to become *painful* or *hurtful:* and in this caſe they become *foreign* to the ſubject before us.

With regard to *religious* obſervances, there can ſeldom be any good reaſon, either for *adding* to what God has enjoined; or for *rejecting* ſuch additions, (unleſs carried beyond all bounds of moderation) when made by competent authority. The great misfortune has ever been, that men wiſh to obtain the favour of God by inſtitutions which do no good; and fear to incur his diſpleaſure by compliances which do no harm.

Indeed this laſt kind of ſuperſtition is by many carried ſtill farther. Where a duty is, on *all* hands, allowed to be neceſſary, they fear to truſt their ſuperiors with the inoffenſive power of determining the place, and time, and manner, of performing it. But can theſe fears and ſcruples make a part of *true religion?* If the Governor of the World be

be a *moral* Governor; if the great end of his government be no other, than the *trial* of our virtue, and the *improvement* of our nature; if this ſtate of diſcipline be evidently deſigned to prepare and qualify us for a ſtate of perfection and happineſs: we can have no cauſe to diſquiet ourſelves about theſe *frivolous* matters, apparently unconnected with all the great objects of *divine* adminiſtration.

If theſe obſervations be true, give me leave to ſubmit it to your own reflexion, how far they are *applicable* to the complaints we often hear againſt our *Articles* and *Liturgy*. The Articles, we will ſay, are not exactly what we might wiſh them to be. Some of them are expreſſed in *doubtful* terms: others are *inaccurate*, perhaps *unphiloſophical*: others again may chance to *miſlead* an ignorant reader into ſome *erroneous* opinion. But is there any one among them that leads to IMMORALITY? Is there one in the number that will make us revengeful, or cruel, or unjuſt? Is there a ſingle clauſe, from firſt to laſt, that will furniſh excuſe or encouragement to unkind parents, to undutiful children, to diſobedient ſubjects? Nothing of all

this. Our *faith* is connected with our *duty*; and will ſecurely abide that teſt, which our Saviour himſelf has given us. *A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruits* *.——So again our *Liturgy* is not perhaps in every part of it, ſo well diſpoſed, or ſo happily expreſſed, or ſo carefully guarded, as it might be: Yet nothing can be more trifling than the employment of thoſe men, who think they ſerve the intereſts of religion, by tearing it in pieces, only that they may have the pleaſure of new modelling it to their own taſte. Were the *objections* made to it more weighty than they are, they would ſtill deſerve very little attention from thoſe who are convinced that the *effects* are innocent; from thoſe who fear not to maintain, that the happineſs of men is the end, and the meaſure, even of our duty to God.

* Matt. vii. 16.

CHARGE VII.

On the SACRAMENTS.

Reverend BRETHREN,

I HAVE frequently taken occaſion to lay before you my ſentiments on the doctrine and diſcipline of the Church of Chriſt. But it has not yet fallen in my way to ſpeak of the *Sacraments*. This however is a ſubject at no time *improper* for your conſideration; and at *preſent*, as it ſeems, on more accounts than one, peculiarly *ſeaſonable*. Many diſputes have been raiſed about it, both in ancient and modern times. But perhaps it may appear, on a careful inquiry, that there is little *ground* for diſpute: that here, as in many other inſtances, men differ more about

words than *things*: and that where the contending parties differ moſt from each other, they *both* of them deſert the beſt interpretations of ſcripture, and the expreſs declarations of our national church.

In this inquiry the church itſelf ſhall be my guide: not ſurely in *oppoſition* to Scripture, but in aid and illuſtration of it.—The religion of Proteſtants is contained in their *Bible*. What cannot be made out by certain warrant of holy writ, is no part of *our* creed. But we truſt, the compilers of our *public offices* have carefully and honeſtly followed the rule preſcribed. If at any time they ſhall be found to have departed from it, *we* alſo muſt depart from them.

I mean therefore to ground my following diſcourſe on what we have all been taught, and what we profeſs to teach, in our *Church Catechiſm*: to clear the *meaning* of what is there delivered: and to examine the *truth* of it. Little more can be wanting to ſettle our minds on this important ſubject: to free it from the *confuſion* in which it has ſometimes been involved; and to rectify the *errors*, if there

there *be* any ſuch, which oppoſition of *party*, rather than principle, may have produced among us.

I. The Church begins with a general definition of the word *Sacrament*. This we are told is

"An outward and viſible ſign of an inward and ſpiritual grace, given unto us; ordained by Chriſt himſelf, as a means whereby we receive the ſame, and a pledge to aſſure us thereof."

In this definition, the chief thing, which may ſeem to require explanation, is the word *grace*: a word which many have underſtood to ſignify the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit. But the compilers of our Catechiſm had *no* ſuch meaning. They meant only a *favour* or *benefit*. Thus the word is frequently uſed in many parts of the Liturgy: and this was its *common* meaning in thoſe times, when the Catechiſm was compoſed. Had more been intended by it in this place, the expreſſion of *ſpiritual* grace would have been a mere tautology. I will ſay no more at preſent. For, when

when the distinct meaning of *each* sacrament comes to be pointed out, the interpretation here given will appear indisputable.

We have then a *visible* sign of a *spiritual* benefit conferred. What more remains? The positive institution of *Christ himself*. On this head there can be no doubt. But with what *view* was the appointment made? Why, the *sign*, we are told, was ordained as a *means*, whereby the benefit is received, and a *pledge* to assure us of it: that is, as I understand it, the sign was to declare both our *acceptance* of the benefit, and God's *promise* to confer it. This will be made more clear as we go along. At present I will but just point out to your observation, that I consider the sign as *declaratory* only, not *efficient*, of the benefit represented by it. In ancient times, it is well known, men's thoughts were signified by *actions* as well as *words*: in conformity to which practice, the various rites of religion, whether sacred or profane, had each of them a distinct sense and *meaning*. Sometimes they were designed to represent *past* transactions; at other times to create an expectation of events yet *to come*: not unfrequently they were made

to

to ſerve *both* purpoſes; in which caſe the double ſignification of the repreſentative action anſwered to the double ſenſe of verbal predictions; and more nearly of *thoſe* predictions (inſtances of which are not wanting) where prophecy was conveyed under the *form* of hiſtory. I believe no attentive reader of the Old Teſtament will call for particular examples: nor can any one, who conſiders, think it ſtrange, that either the *outward* ceremonies of our religion, or the things *ſignified* by them, ſhould have been prefigured under the Jewiſh Diſpenſation.

But to come to particulars:

II. The outward ſign, in BAPTISM, is *Water:* wherein it was required by Chriſt, that *all* his followers ſhould be *waſhed*, or *baptized*, (the words have the ſame meaning) *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt* *: that is, of *all* the perſons concerned in the Goſpel Diſpenſation. I know there is one ſet of men, who call themſelves Chriſtians, and yet deny the *perſonality* of the Holy Ghoſt. But they have not been

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

able

able to reconcile this denial with the baptiſmal form inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf.

The *thing ſignified* by this ſacrament, "the "inward ſpiritual grace," is

"A death unto ſin, and a new birth unto "righteouſneſs." The words, you ſee, are highly figurative: but the meaning of them is no more than this; that the rite of Baptiſm repreſents our *entrance* and *admiſſion* into the *Church of Chriſt*. This interpretation is plainly pointed out by the words which follow:

"For, being by nature born in ſin, and "the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

However ſtrange it may appear, the Scriptures plainly aſſure us, that we are all *by nature, children of wrath* *: that is, *ſinful*, as well as *mortal* beings. I ſay not, that we are born *guilty*. For either the aſſertion is unintelligible, or the thing itſelf impoſſible: and the paſſages in our Articles, which might

* Eph. ii. 3.

ſeem

ſeem to favour ſuch an expreſſion, have long been underſtood, as it were by common conſent, to admit of ſome latitude in their interpretation. But, though we are born without *actual* ſin, yet it will not ſurely be denied, that we are born exceedingly *liable* to ſin: that the frame of our nature furniſhes numberleſs *temptations*: and that human virtue, unleſs aſſiſted from above, has ever been found too *weak* to *contend* againſt them. It is true indeed that our various principles and paſſions are both kindly and wiſely conſtituted: well adapted to that *imperfect* condition of being, in which God has ſeen fit to place us here upon earth. But, whether this imperfection *itſelf* was *original* in the human race, or they have *fallen* from the ſtate in which they were firſt created, is a queſtion which *Reaſon* will refuſe to anſwer. Surely it will not become us to deny with *confidence*, that the *ſame* cauſes, which made us *mortal*, *may* alſo have made us *ſinful* beings. But, whatever might be the cauſe, the *effect* is but too certain. We are all of us, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *ſold under ſin** : *and ſo death*, *the wages of ſin*†, *muſt paſs upon all men*. Here now the

* Rom. vii. 24, † Rom. vi. 23.—v. 12.

Goſpel

Gospel steps in to our relief; and promises to restore us from sin to holiness, from death to immortality: both which promises are shadowed out to us under the images of the two sacraments.

BAPTISM, of which I am now speaking, represents to our view a *purification* from *sin*. The Apostle indeed carried his idea farther, and considered the act of immersion in water as signifying a *burial*; the termination of our sinful life: and the *rising again* from the water as a *new birth**, as an entrance, that is, on a life of piety and virtue. The profession of Christianity evidently *implies* such a change: and in old times, we know, *Christians* and *Saints* were synonimous terms. It is in this sense, and on this account, that we are said to be made by Baptism the *children of grace*. This too, we may presume to have been our *Saviour*'s meaning, when he requires us to be *born of water, and the spirit*‡. The *spirit* here is opposed to the significant *action*, as in other places to significant *words*: for you cannot but have observed, that the *letter* and the *spirit* are frequently contrasted in

* Rom. vi, 4. ‡ John iii. 5.

the

the New Teſtament. Our Saviour's aſſertion therefore, concerning the neceſſity of Baptiſm, amounts to this, That no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, without the *profeſſion* of Chriſtianity, and the *obſervance* of its laws. Whoever is a candidate for this high prize muſt *firſt* indeed be baptized with *water*. But much *more* is to be done. He muſt not barely ſubmit to the *rite* of *Baptiſm*, the *emblem* only and *repreſentation* of a Chriſtian life: but he muſt *die* and be *born again* in a *ſpiritual* ſenſe; he muſt repent of his ſins, and *live unto God*.

That *figurative* Baptiſm, predicted by John, was quite another matter. He foretold, that the diſciples of Chriſt ſhould be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire: and this prediction was accompliſhed, when *they were ſuddenly filled with the Spirit of God, and cloven tongues, as of fire, appeared and ſat upon each of them**. In the firſt ages too, *miraculous powers* were frequently granted to thoſe that believed: and theſe extraordinary gifts of the Spirit uſually followed their Baptiſm: that is, their open profeſſion of faith in Chriſt. But this has evidently nothing to

* Acts ii. 2, 3, 4.

do

do with the ordinary adminiſtration of Baptiſm.

Do we then *exclude* the aſſiſtance of the Spirit from this holy office? God forbid! We know too well the need we have of it, and the aſſurances of receiving it, (on *all* fit occaſions) which are given us in the *Goſpel*. But we think that *no* ſuch aſſurance is conveyed (I mean *expreſſly* conveyed) in the rite of Baptiſm. The aids, we ſay, of God's Holy Spirit, however important in themſelves, are not *the inward and ſpiritual grace*, conferred and accepted by this ſignificant action; which means purely and ſimply our *admiſſion* into the Church of Chriſt. Among the *conſequences* indeed of this admiſſion, the gifts of the Spirit are ever to be devoutly remembered, and gratefully acknowledged: and the ſame act, which admits us into the Church, is a *pledge* alſo, or a promiſe, (though indirectly) of *all* thoſe advantages, whatever they be, which it has pleaſed God to annex to the profeſſion of a Chriſtian.

We are next informed of the qualifications required of perſons to be baptized. Theſe are

" Repentance,

"Repentance, whereby they forſake ſin, "and faith whereby they ſtedfaſtly believe "the promiſes of God, made to them in "that ſacrament."

This needs little explanation. The very *act* of baptiſm implies, that we *repent* of the ſins committed in our unregenerate ſtate. It equally implies, that we *believe* in thoſe gracious promiſes, which are expreſſed and exhibited in this ſacred rite: comprehending *all* the means of ſpiritual improvement, which our condition demands, and our religion ſupplies.

III. In treating of the *Lord's Supper* we muſt be more particular. We muſt inquire both *what* it ſignifies, and *how* that ſignification is conveyed: for what *end* it was inſtituted, and what *benefit* we derive from it: and laſtly, what are the *qualifications*, or conditions, required to make us worthy receivers.

1. *Bread and Wine*, the *outward* part, or ſign, in the Lord's Supper, repreſent to us *the Body and Blood of Chriſt:* which we are

told, is *the inward part* or *thing ſignified. This*, in the language before uſed by the Church, is the *ſpiritual grace*. We *literally* receive only bread and wine: we *ſpiritually* eat the fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his blood. When theſe are ſaid to be *verily and indeed* taken by the faithful, it is uncandid, in the higheſt degree, to charge the Engliſh Church with favouring the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. The words *cannot* have *this* meaning, whatever elſe they may mean; becauſe it is repugnant to the whole context. The *outward* part of the ſacrament is expreſſly ſaid to be *bread and wine*. The Body and Blood of Chriſt conſtitute the *inward* part, the thing figured or *ſignified*. It is a *ſpiritual*, not a carnal, benefit; and was evidently ſo underſtood by the compilers of the Catechiſm.

But when we ſay, that the thing repreſented is the Body and Blood of Chriſt, the expreſſion is elliptical. We mean to ſay, as he himſelf ſays *, and as our Church repeats in the office of conſecration, the body *which is given for us*; the blood *which is ſhed for us*. We mean to expreſs his propitiatory *ſacrifice*

* Luke xxii. 19. 20.

for

for the *ſins of the whole world** : which though *intimated* only in the Catechiſm, is clearly and fully *aſſerted* in *other* parts of our public offices.

When therefore we are admitted to the Lord's table, we declare our acceptance of the ineſtimable benefit of Chriſtian redemption: which benefit is offered and conveyed to us under the ſignificant emblems of bread and wine. Theſe are, on *our* part, the *means* of receiving it; on God's part, they are *a pledge to aſſure us thereof*. The due adminiſtration of this Sacrament has the force of a promiſe, *made* by God, and humbly *accepted* by the devout communicant.—If any man chuſe to call this tranſaction a *fœderal rite*, I ſee no harm in the expreſſion; provided only we forget not the infinite *diſtance* between the parties to ſuch a covenant. God's promiſes to men we well underſtand: and we receive them with reverence and gratitude. But men's promiſes to God are not ſo eaſily explained. The word in its literal ſenſe, is evidently *inapplicable* to them. For where no advantage can be *given*, none can be *promiſed*.

* 1. John ii. 2.

We bind ourſelves to *one another* for *mutual profit*. We *cannot* bind ourſelves to the Supreme Being; becauſe no man can be profitable to his Maker. Whenever therefore the Scripture ſeems to authorize *vows* to God, or repreſents the Almighty as entering into *covenant* with his creatures; ſuch paſſages are always to be underſtood as *accommodations* only to human infirmity.

2. But how does the act of *receiving bread and wine* admit of any ſuch interpretation, as we have here given it? This is a queſtion, which to the generality of writers on the ſubject before us ſeems never to have occurred. Uſe and habit often prevent inquiry. In the preſent caſe the ſigns and things ſignified have been ſo long aſſociated in our minds, that we ſee nothing to wonder at; nothing to excite our curioſity.—Otherwiſe there might have ſeemed to be no very *ſtriking* reſemblance between the ſacramental bread and wine, and the body and blood of a crucified Saviour. Or, ſuppoſing the elements to have firſt acquired their ſignification from poſitive inſtitution, which in a great degree they certainly did; yet a more *important* difficulty ſtill remains.

remains. Had we only been directed to *break* the bread, and *pour out* the wine, we might tolerably well have conceived the propriety of the rite; as ſerving to remind us of the body which was *bruiſed for our iniquities*, and the blood which was *ſhed* for our redemption. But why are the bread and wine to be *eaten* and *drunk?* Why, under this figurative repreſentation, are we to eat the body and drink the blood, of Jeſus Chriſt? Nothing but the force of inveterate prejudice could make this idea familiar to us. Yet nothing can be clearer, or more reaſonable, if we attend to thoſe forms of religion, which had been eſtabliſhed all over the world at the *time* when this rite was inſtituted.

The religion of *Pagans*, to a very great degree, conſiſted in *ſacrifices:* that is, in *feaſts* given to the *gods*. In many of theſe feaſts there was a ſort of community between gods and men. Sometimes inded the *whole* victim, but oftener the *choiceſt parts only*, belonged to the gods: the remaining part was conſumed, either by the worſhippers *in perſon*, or by the *prieſts*, who repreſented them, and acted for them; and this participation of the

victim was underſtood to imply a ſhare in the benefits expected from the ſacrifice.

Whether theſe Pagan ideas were originally derived from the inſtitutions of God himſelf; or he was pleaſed to accommodate his own inſtitutions to the prejudices of mankind; is a point on which I have no occaſion to ſpeak. Certain it is, that ſacrifices among the *Jews* were of *divine appointment*. Not that the God of Iſrael was underſtood to be a *partaker* in the feaſts which were given him. At leaſt the *wiſer* part among that people had juſter conceptions of the Deity: and the miſconceptions of the vulgar were often reproved and corrected. *If I were hungry*, ſays God, *I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulneſs thereof. Will I eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats* * ? The oblations therefore made to Jehovah were *imaginary* feaſts, not *real*. They were only ſo many *expreſſive* actions, by which men ſignified their religious ſentiments. Indeed it made no ſort of difference, with reſpect to the *import* of ſacrifices, whether the deity to whom they were offered, partook in *ſhew*

* Pſalm l. 13.

only,

only, or in *reality*. In either caſe the worſhipper was underſtood to aſk, or acknowledge, the favour of his god: and in either caſe he was underſtood to *intitle* himſelf to this favour, and in ſome meaſure to *accept* and *enjoy* it, by the ſhare he took in theſe ſacrificial feaſts.

It is altogether needleſs for me to enumerate the different *kinds* of ſacrifices, which were contained in the Jewiſh Ritual. Suffice it to ſay, that *all* of them, in different reſpects, prefigured the great Chriſtian ſacrifice: and that every poſſible benefit expected from *any* of them, though often in a more ſublime and ſpiritual ſenſe, is obtained for us by the death of Chriſt.

Yet not *ſo* obtained, that nothing is to be done on *our* part. God makes us the gracious offer of redemption: but he does not *obtrude* it on thoſe, who refuſe to *declare* their acceptance of it. Now this offer, and this acceptance, are *ſignified* by the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*. By eating the bread and drinking the wine, which are made to repreſent the body and blood of Chriſt, we in

effect *partake* of the *ſacred victim*. By this imaginary feaſt on the ſacrifice offered for us to God, we participate in the benefits of Chriſtian redemption. By receiving the elements of bread and wine, we teſtify our *acceptance* of the ineſtimable bleſſing, which, under theſe outward and viſible ſigns, is tendered to us, and conferred upon us.

It may be true indeed, that this Chriſtian Rite does not, in all points, *coincide* with any *one* ſpecies of ſacrificial feaſts preſcribed to the Jews. Neither does the ſacrifice itſelf, to which it relates, correſpond exactly with any of the Jewiſh ſacrifices: as being doubtleſs of a more tranſcendent and comprehenſive nature. But this is of little moment, indeed of no moment at all, againſt the explication here given. The only thing material is this, which ſurely will not be denied by careful inquirers, That this feaſt was inſtituted in *analogy* to the ſacrificial feaſts then in uſe; and, like them, *repreſented* a communication of the *ſacrifice itſelf*, and the *benefits* to be expected from it. Obſerve, however, that theſe benefits are not *preſent*, but *future*.

The

The ſacrament is no more, than a ſign, or a *pledge to aſſure us thereof.*

3. The *end* propoſed in the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, is expreſſed by the Church in plain and few words. Indeed our Saviour himſelf had fully declared it: It was "for a pepetual remembrance of the ſacri-"fice of the death of Chriſt, and of the "benefits which we receive thereby." That we might never forget who it was that *died* for us; and what an infinite treaſure of divine *mercy* is thus opened to all true believers. How indeed is it poſſible for us to forget what the very *nature* of the rite continually ſuggeſts to our minds? It is not the *doctrine*, but the *death* of Chriſt, which was deſigned to be the object of our remembrance. It is not the death of a good man, who died a *martyr* to the truth; but the *ſacrifice* of the death of Chriſt: his *propitiatory* ſacrifice *for the ſins of the whole world**.—I ſhould not lay ſo much ſtreſs on theſe expreſſions of our Church, if they were not equally the expreſſions of Holy Scripture.

* 1 John, ii. 2.

The

The main design then of this institution was to inspire us with gratitude to the Author of our redemption; and this gratitude is excited by representing and prefiguring the mighty benefit, to be hereafter conferred on us, of pardon and salvation.

4. But there is also a *present* benefit to be obtained, arising from the confident *assurance* of these future blessings. This benefit our Church expresses in the following words: viz.

"The strengthening and refreshing our "*souls* by the body and blood of Christ, as "our *bodies* are by the bread and wine."

This again is a *figurative* expression. But the meaning is sufficiently plain. The sacrament, as we have said, is a *pledge* to assure us of divine mercy. Now this assurance conveys both *strength* and *comfort* to the mind of the devout receiver. Strength, that he may overcome the temptations, and comfort, that he may support the afflictions, of this mortal state. Here a wide field opens upon our view. But the time will not permit me to enlarge;

enlarge: I have already treſpaſſed too long. Only let us keep in mind the diſtinction between *the grace ſignified*, and the benefit *actually obtained*. The grace ſignified is redemption and ſalvation: the benefit immediately obtained is only the *proſpect* of that ſalvation, forcibly impreſſed on onr minds by this ſignificant rite.

5. The qualifications of the receivers are comprehended in one word; they are "to ex-"amine themſelves:" to what purpoſe, we ſhall ſee immediately.

The *neceſſity* of the ſelf-examination may firſt perhaps have been ſuggeſted by a miſtaken interpretation of a paſſage in one of St. Paul's epiſtles *: and it ought not to be diſſembled, that there is *no* paſſage in Scripture, which expreſſly requires it of us as a condition of receiving the ſacrament. Yet may not the *propriety* at leaſt of ſuch a conduct be eaſily deduced from the nature and end of the ſacrament itſelf? Without *repenting* of our ſins paſt, and forming good *reſolutions* for the time to come, with what face

* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

can

can we approach the Lord's table, and claim to ourſelves the benefits of that redemption, which belongs only to the children of grace? Without *faith in the mercy of God*, to pretend that we embrace the *offers* of mercy is not piety, but hypocriſy.—Without *a thankful remembrance of the death of Chriſt*, we clearly *pervert* this holy inſtitution in the moſt eſſential point. Without *charity to all men* we are guilty of the utmoſt preſumption in applying to ourſelves thoſe promiſes of pardon, in which, we ought to know, we have no ſhare. *For if we forgive not from our hearts every one his brother their treſpaſſes, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our treſpaſſes* * — This being the caſe, it highly concerns us to uſe *every* precaution, which may tend to preſerve us from ſuch aggravated folly and impiety: and, as *the heart*, we know, *is deceitful above all things* †, it is beſt for us not to truſt it; but to ſearch out even with a ſcrupulous exactneſs, every fault and failing which lurks in our breaſts, and which perhaps we have had the art and addreſs to conceal from ourſelves as well as the world.

* Matt. vi. 15.—xviii. 35. † Jerem. xvii. 9

It

It was not indeed ſuch capital defects as theſe, which *St. Paul* cenſured in the *Corinthians*. But will any man ſay, that there is no way, but *one*, of receiving the Sacrament unworthily? If *they* drew upon themſelves the judgments of God, by confounding the Lord's Supper with a common meal; may not *we* alſo have cauſe to fear divine vengeance, if we partake without *repentance*, without *faith*, without *charity?* Is it not wiſer therefore to *judge ourſelves*, in theſe eſſential points, that we *be not judged of the Lord?*

I ſhall conclude, where I began, with the *definition* of the word *Sacrament*. After what has been ſaid, it will be better underſtood, and more diſtinctly applied. A Sacrament, we are told, conſiſts of two parts: an *outward ſign*, and an *inward grace*. Of the outward ſigns there can be no diſpute. The difficulty is to aſcertain the inward and ſpiritual grace, conveyed or expreſſed in each Sacrament. Now *Baptiſm*, we ſay, denotes our paſſage from a life of *ſin* to a life of *holineſs*. The Lord's Supper, by ſetting before us the Body and Blood of Chriſt, aſſures us of

of a yet greater change, from *death* to *immortality*. The grace ſignified by Baptiſm is *repentance:* the grace ſignified by the Lord's Supper is *pardon*. By Baptiſm we become members of Chriſt's Church here upon *earth:* by the Lord's Supper we are aſſured of admiſſion into his everlaſting kingdom in *heaven*.

CONCIO

HABITA

IN TEMPLO BEATÆ MARIÆ,

Pro gradu Doctoratûs in Sacrâ Theologiâ.

ANNO 1758.

CONCIO

HABITA

IN TEMPLO BEATÆ MARIÆ,

ANNO 1758.

MATT. vii. 16.

Ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς.

A fructibus eorum cognoſcetis eos. Vulg.

NOTUM eſt omnibus, et pervulgatum, incrementa illa ſcientiæ, quæ hodiernis philoſophis tot lauros peperêre, non magis rationi, quam *experientiæ* deberi. Quæ, cum aliis rebus tantam lucem affuderit, non video cur in ipſâ religione pro vanâ et inutili ſit habenda. Multæ, ni fallor, controverſiæ inter Theologos agitantur, quæ, ſi experientiam

rientiam audire velint, illico ceſſent et conquieſcant. Multa pertinaciter ſanè tenentur, quæ, ſi *huic* pareatur, planè deſerenda ſint et abjicienda. Nonnulla fortaſſe neglecta et ſpreta jacent, quæ *hæc* demum in lucem proferat, efficiatque ut dignitatem ſuam facilè omnibus commendent.

Homines, ad agendum nati, de rebus ferè quibuſcunque, quæ ad vitam moreſque pertinent, ſatis prudenter judicant. At de naturâ, providentiâ, conſiliis Dei, cum perpauca ſapientiſſimis percipiuntur, tum vulgus philoſophorum quotidie prolabitur in errores vel impios vel ridendos; ſi tamen cuiquam ſano ridere libeat, ubi rebus graviſſimis ſanctiſſimiſque ſtultorum temeritas admiſceatur. Nec intereſt, in *operibus* Dei perſcrutandis, an in *ſermone* explicando, verſentur: cum eæ ſint anguſtiæ mentis humanæ, ut, quocunque ſe vertat, difficultatibus prematur; nec fidei minus quam naturæ interpretes in infinitam prope diſceſſerint varietatem ſententiarum. Hoc interea certum et exploratum habemus, non poſſe adverſari religionem Chriſti *officiis* humanis. Quidni igitur, in diverſis Chriſtianorum diſciplinis

inter

inter se conferendis, *ex fructibus arbores cognoscamus?* Quidni ex iis quæ aperta sunt et cognita, de obscuris et ambiguis judicium feramus?

Video, *primis* Evangelii temporibus, totam hanc rationem disputandi et lubricam fuisse, et non necessariam. At post tot secula elapsa; post tot formas religionis, longis temporum intervallis natas et extinctas; post tot vicissitudines rerum humanarum, in quibus singulæ fere disciplinæ vim suam atque indolem manifestis indiciis prodidêrunt; *nobis* certe licet ad experientiam provocare, et sapientiam quærere periculo alieno.

Nec desunt profectò exemplorum documenta in utramque partem: facilius tamen invenias, quod vites, quam quod imiteris; totumque hoc genus dicendi prudentiùs adhibetur ad inania et falsa arguenda, quam ad vera et recta confirmanda.—Προσέχετε, inquit Christus, ἀπὸ τῶν Ψευδοπροφητῶν, οἵτινες ἔρχονται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ἐνδύμασι προβάτων, ἔσθεν δέ εἰσι λύκοι ἅρπαγες. Ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτές. Quæ quidem verba nescio an satis accuratè ab interpretibus exponantur. Quanquam enim viderant hic notari, qui

ſimulatâ quâdam *bonitate* incautos capiant; contendunt tamen eoſdem, ſecundum Chriſti mentem, ex *morum improbitate* dignoſcendos. Quod mihi ſecùs videtur. Neque enim crediderim Dominum noſtrum eandem rationem monſtrâſſe veritatem exquirendi, quâ ipſi Ψευδοπροφηται nos uti cupiunt, ut in retia ſua incidamus. De moribus agitur, quantum video, non *magiſtri*, ſed *diſcipulorum*. Redarguendi errores non ex culpis *docentium*, ſed ex ipſius *doctrinæ* vi et efficaciâ ad pietatem et virtutem imminuendam. Qui iſta nobis præcipiunt, unde vitæ officia turbentur; unde ratio auctoritate ſuâ exuatur, dominentur affectus; unde ipſum denique evangelium vi ſuâ et effectu deſtituatur: ab *his* magiſtris, utpote vanis et improbis, *cavendum*; etiamſi vel maximè ſpeciem *pietatis*, præ ſe tulerint. Οὐ δύναται δένδρον ἀγαθὸν καρπὸς πονηροὺς ποιεῖν.

Qui verò hæc apertè, et ſine arte, faciunt, non ſunt magnoperè reformidandi. Communis enim hominum ſenſus, communis utilitas repugnat. Quapropter *Gnoſticorum* diſciplina, nec diu viguit, nec amantes veræ pietatis decipere potuit. Ab *illis* præcipuè metuendum, qui vim *occultam* adhibent, et

quaſi

quasi cuniculos agunt ad virtutem subruendam: qui, quò minus conspici potest quid agant, eò graviorem intentant ruinam. Horum fraudibus ut obsistatur, haud inutile erit *principia* quædam ponere, ad judicium nostrum regendum; et certos quasi *locos* describere, unde ratiocinia nostra peti possint. Qui in hos perpetuò respexerit, haud facilè erraverit in *fructibus dignoscendis*, quos variæ Theologorum Disciplinæ aut præteritis seculis genuerint, aut nostro gignunt: fructuum autem discrimine rectè constituto, de ipsis *disciplinis* quid pronuntiandum sit, facile omnibus patebit.

Sic igitur statuendum censeo. Omnem disciplinam καρπὸς πονηρὸς ποιεῖν, quæ aut *avocat* homines ab agendo, aut efficit ut *inepta* agant, aut *affectu* magis quam *ratione* ad agendum ducit. Quippe cum hæc omnia aliena existumem à naturâ et indole religionis Christianæ, tum etiam effectus, qui exinde gignuntur, felicitatem imminuunt generis humani.

I. Primum igitur hoc mihi sumo. Nul-

lam disciplinam verè Christianam homines ab *agendo* abstrahere, et ad *disputandum* excitare.

Non erat Christo institutum, ut *philosophiam* doceret. Neque enim sapientes, sed populum erudiebat: nec differendi artem, sed vivendi, hominibus monstrabat. Missus erat à Deo minister et nuntius æternæ salutis. Hanc, suo sanguine empturus, discipulis suis proponebat; conditiones ab ipsis præstandas exigebat. Neque has diversas diversis hominibus dabat: sed omni discipulorum ordini, nullo aut ingenii, aut disciplinæ, aut conditionis vitæ, discrimine adhibito, planè *eadem*; quales universi, modo adesset voluntas, et intelligere possent, et explere. Quòd si Apostolorum nonnulli paululum recessérint ab exemplo Magistri; id tribuebant pertinaciæ Judæorum: qui cum puram et simplicem doctrinam Christi invitis auribus accepissent, necessariò accommodanda fuit docendi ratio ipsorum fatuitati et insipientiæ; vel, si quis idem dici malit alio verbo, ipsorum *philosophiæ* accommodanda. Erant enim apud Judæos philosophi; quales scilicet prodire solebant ex scholis Pythagoræ et Platonis: homines nugatores, verbis ludentes, demonstrata ac ficta,

modo

modo figuris et imaginibus involuta, juxta æstimantes. Nec mirum insanam hanc sapientiam, quæ post Alexandri tempora totum fere orbem peragrasset, ipsam quoque Palæstinam infeciſſe, Græcorum imperiis diu subjectam. Sub eorundem regum auspiciis qui libros Hebraicos cum Græcis communicasse traduntur, Græcorum quoque somnia ad Hebræos migravêre. Hinc illæ, quas Apostolus damnat, διδασκαλίαι δαιμονίων; hinc fortasse fabula animarum in nova corpora transmigrantium; hinc denique puerile illud studium, nomina captandi, verba in alienum sensum detorquendi, historiolas pro libitu fingendi; omnes denique res per Typos et Allegorias non modò *exponendi*, sed, quod minus patienter feras, *comprobandi*. Cum hi homines alliciendi essent ad fidem Christianam, aut in fide nuper susceptâ retinendi; prudenter sane Apostoli inveteratis eorum præjudiciis nonnihil indulgebant, remittebantque fortasse aliquid de severitate et gravitate disciplinæ Christianæ. Hoc interea certum est, ab illâ ipsâ philosophiâ magna mala, etiam Apostolis viventibus, in ecclesiam fuisse invecta; quod et ipsi, multis locis, prædixerant futurum. Unde Divus Paulus

Paulus Coloſſenſibus mandat, caveant ſibi ne decipiantur (ſic enim recte exponit *Grotius*): διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης. Nam fruſtra eſt quod quærunt interpretes, de *Græcâ* an *Judaicâ* philoſophiâ hic agatur. Cum manifeſtò conſtet philoſophiam Judæorum ex Græcis fontibus eſſe derivatam; pollutam ſolummodò, id quod neceſſario fiebat, Alexandrinâ et Perſicâ ſuperſtitione.

Quod vero, iſtis temporibus, fidei *najcenti* impedimento fuerat, id multo magis *adultam* et ſtabilitam perturbavit. Eadem hæc deliria Platonicorum mentes hominum adeo occuparunt, ut non tam viciſſe Chriſtus videretur repugnantes Philoſophos, quam horum ineptiæ fuiſſe transfuſæ in doctrinam Chriſtianam: cujus ſimplicitatem corrupêrunt, pulchritudinem deformârunt, vim atque effectum ſuſtulere.

Hinc ortum Theologorum genus: hominum adeo intemperanter abutentium otio et literis, ut faciliùs quis pervenire poſſet ad maximarum rerum cognitionem, quam iſtorum verboſas diſputationes, non dicam animo complecti, ſed vel currenti oculo perſtringere.

ſtringere. Quæ tamen diſputationes, ſi ipſis credamus, non erant paucorum gratiâ elaboratæ, ſed cognoſcendæ univerſis. Nam ſi vel minimum diſceſſiſſes à decretis patrum, actum erat de ſalute æternâ. Dura ſane conditio iis propoſita, qui ſæpe decerni viderent de rebus non intellectis; ſæpe eccleſiam ſcindi in varias partes; ſæpe, intra pauciſſimos annos, et eccleſiam, et eccleſiæ dominos, contraria ſtatuiſſe!

Inter has concertationes tantum abfuit, ut evangelium Chriſti plenum ſuum effectum ſortiretur, ut ad labem potiùs et perniciem converſum ſit humani generis. Inflammatæ enim hominum mentes; irritata ſtudia vincendi ac deprimendi adverſas partes; omnes fere provincias Romani Imperii vis et odium pervagata. Dumque hæc nugatoria obſtinatè adeò perſequuntur, abductæ interea cogitationes ab artibus, non modò elegantibus quas dicimus, ſed *verè utilibus*, vivendi, imperandi, patriam contra hoſtes tuendi. Dicitur Archimedem, figuris quibuſdam Geometricis intentum, à Romano milite fuiſſe occiſum. At hi homines gravioribus ſane ſtudiis impediebantur, ne aut ſibi aut aliis providerent!

Dum

Dum enim *verborum* argutiis occupantur; dum *his* ſtudiis dies nocteſque invigilant; dum id demum pro magno et præclaro ducunt, ſiquis novâ formulâ ſententiam complectatur nullam; facti ſunt, imprudentes, præda *barbarorum*. Eorum nempe qui et fidem, inter pleroſque receptam, et præſtabilem omnem ſcientiam, communi quaſi ſepulchro condidêrunt.

Quod autem artes humaniores damnum acceperant ab inani aut falſâ religione, idem hoc feliciori temporum ſorte cumulatim poſteà rependebant. Cum enim diu ſepultæ et obrutæ jacuiſſent, non citiùs ad vitam redîre, quam diſputantibus adhuc Theologis bellum indicerent. Philoſophia ſanè Platonis, ſolio deturbata, ſine honore jacebat. At arrogantior Ariſtoteles, ſcholaſticorum præſidio ſtipatus, in locum venerat; et imperium exercuit plane regium in totum orbem Chriſtianum. Nihil erat in evangelio adeò obſcurè monſtratum, quod libri Ariſtotelis illuſtrare non poterant; nihil adeo breviter dictum, quod non illius aſſeclæ multis magniſque voluminibus explicare et dilatare valuerunt: nihil denique adeò perſpicuum et

ſimplex,

simplex, quod non doctis suis laboribus in densam caliginem abdidêre. Nescio quo pacto contigerit, ut primi literarum instauratores mallent *veterem* tyrannum, quam novum. Hoc certum est, multos in Platonis castra transfugisse. Deinde, æquato certamine, saniores quique pugnæ se subtraxêrunt; armisque contra *utrumque* feliciter versis, servile jugum de cervicibus suis depulêre. Eadem nempe ætas principia vidit reformatæ philosophiæ et religionis: quæ quo longiùs à se invicem recessêre, eo latiùs se diffundebant. Quo utraque earum cautiùs se abstineret à provinciâ alienâ, eo feliciùs regebat suam; eo plura et certiora incrementa capiebat.

Fatendum est insignes has mutationes nec statim factas nec ubique. Nec mirum profectò Pontifices Romanos Aristotelem in Cathedram evexisse, et cum eo quasi communicasse imperium, cujus se armis et propugnaculo tutos fore sperabant. Sed dolendum, fuisse qui *hujus* jugum ferrent, cum jugum *papale* exuissent. Dolendum posteà summi ingenii viros etiam Platonis deliramenta revocare voluisse. Indignandum, *his* temporibus, et in *hac luce* literarum, exortum esse genus hominum,

hominum, qui quicquid ineptiarum contrahi potuerit ex ſcriptis omnibus omnium philoſophorum, totum hoc deprehendiſſe ſe gloriantur apud MOSEM et *Prophetas*; idque etiam effeciſſe nullâ animi acie, nullo cogitandi labore; ſed, quod facile quiſpiam crediderit, verba et ſyllabas expiſcando! Vobiſcum intereâ gratulari liceat, pudendam hanc peſtem artium, literarum, religionis, in *veſtras* ædes nondum influxiſſe; apud vos ſtudiorum rationes adeo prudenter diſpertiri, ut (quantum ab humanâ arte provideri potuit) tecti quodammodo et muniti ſitis contra fædi hujus morbi contagionem. Nam qui *veram* philoſophiam callent, ab inani hoc ſimulacro longiſſimè abhorrebunt: et qui *veram religionem* ſequuntur, nihil fere invenient in diſciplinâ ſuâ, quod ſibi cum philoſophis ſit commune. Philoſophia enim non modo, quod dicitur, *paucis* contenta eſt *judicibus*, ſed etiam *ſectatoribus*: Religio, à ſummâ auctoritate profecta, nullius judicium expectat, aut curat; vetat, jubet, denuntiat, *univerſis*. In hoc uno conveniunt, comparatam eſſe *utramque*, ad ſummam hominum utilitatem.

Sed

Sed, ut eò redeam, unde paululum fortaſſe deflexit oratio, *agendum* eſt, non *diſputandum*, homini Chriſtiano. Nullam certe poſtulat Fides in Jeſum aut ſubtilitatem ingenii, aut à negotiis vacuitatem. Sit animus ad diſcendum, et ad obtemperandum paratus, nihil eſt quod quis metuat, ne doctrinam Evangelicam ignoret. Qui ſpe modo æternæ felicitatis Chriſto duce, obtinendæ, ab omni maleficio ſe abſtineat; aut ſiquid admiſerit, admiſiſſe doleat, et ad ſaniorem animum redierit: qui bonum ſe virum, amicum, *civem* præſtet: is demum vere *Chriſtianus* eſt. Non illa arbor pro ferâ ac ſterili habenda eſt, e quâ tam egregii *fructus* naſcuntur.

II. De primo errore ſatis dictum; notandus alter admodum huic affinis tam origine, quam etiam effectu. Nec enim iſti ſolum reprehendendi, qui *nihil* agunt: vix levius peccant, qui *aliud* agunt. Quapropter eas quoque diſciplinas repudiandas cenſeo, quæ homines avocant à *veris* officiis, efficiuntque ut *vana* et *inepta* ſequantur. Quod quis non videt ab iis factum, qui leviſſimum Chriſti jugum inutilibus ceremoniis onerârunt? Antiquiſſimis

quissimis sanè temporibus nonnulla adjecta, quæ ipse minimè imperaverat; alia, per se facilia, definitionibus loci atque temporis facta difficilia: nec videbant Christiani illarum ætatum, quam parum interfit ad veram pietatem, quibus diebus festa celebrentur, quibus locis, quo gestu, quâ verborum formulâ, Deum oremus. Hinc gradatim delapsi in omne genus superstitionis: adeo ut singulorum ferè rituum, quos aut Judæi aut Ethnici exercuissent, vestigia deprehenderes in cultu Christiano. Unde plura sunt incommoda consecuta: primum sanè quòd libertas, quam dederat Christus, temeritate hominum violata fuit; deinde, quod Pharisaica quædam religionis *forma*, vitâ et spiritu destituta, *veræ* religionis locum obtineret. Dumque, ut priùs monstratum, sapientiam professi de verbis litigabant, vulgus hominum docebatur, corpus jejuniis macerare; dies noctesque sacris cantilenis dare; in silvas et solitudines confugere; et amentium vel ferarum imitatione nomen *pietatis* mereri. Siquis hos docuisset religionem Christi cum negotiis posse conjungi; verissimamque esse laudem hominis Christiani, aliis hominibus prodesse: si ad urbes condendas, ad agros colendos, ad mercaturam

mercaturam exercendam, ad connubia denique jungenda fuiſſet hortatus: totam hanc doctrinam, ut impiam ſcilicet et profanam, communi ſuffragio damnâſſent. Cum rectiùs multo diſputari poſſet, ipſorum ſententiam repugnare inſtitutis Chriſti; quod ſocietatem hominum everteret, ipſius naturæ leges ſolveret, ſummamque neceſſariò poſt ſe traheret rerum omnium confuſionem.

At ſuperſtitio, multiplex malum, non unam faciem præ ſe fert. Nonnulli, ut diximus, parvi ducunt præcepta magiſtri; et aliunde malunt ineptias trahere: ſunt vero qui ex ipſo *evangelio* materiem petunt, ad templa *ſtultitiæ* erigenda. Quos quidem homines dubitandum cenſeo, contemptu magis an miſericordiâ proſequi oporteat. Illi qui arcanam quandam *ſapientiam* in ſacris libris quærunt, id ſi minùs prudenter, honorificè tamen inſtituunt facere: ut Philoſophia ſcilicet, quæ tantâ eſt apud eos dignitate, e cœlo demiſſa videatur ad vitam hominum illuſtrandam. At qui inanes ritus, et certas verborum collocationes, et adorantium geſtus ſitumque, et reliqua ejuſdem farraginis, in ſcriptis Apoſtolorum ſolicito animo explorant; qui toti horrent,

horrent, refiliuntque, ubi vel rem leviſſimam videre ſe ſuſpicentur a priſtinâ formâ commutatam: hi profecto, ut id quod ſentio liberè dicam, nec Deum nec Homines nôrunt; et in iſtâ religione, quam tueri ſe profitentur, plane rudes ſunt atque hoſpites. Formam enim cultûs, à Chriſto deſcriptam, quam omnes ipſius diſcipuli ſervare teneantur, invenio nullam. Permiſſa hæc omnia judiciis hominum: qui, ſi religionis ſuæ præcepta recte intellexerint, de *his* rebus minimè diſcrepabunt; vel ſi diſcrepent, non *contendent*, ſcientes id tempus adveniſſe, a Chriſto monſtratum ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσι τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ: quo *mentes* nempe adorantium ſpectantur, non tempora, aut loci, aut formulæ verborum, quibus vota proferantur; omnemque adeo rationem Deum colendi gratam *illi* cenſendam, quæ utilis ſit *colentibus*; quæ *fructus* pariat veræ pietatis.

Hæc ſi *majoribus* noſtris *cognita fuiſſent*, quot turbas ſeditioneſque, quantas hominum ſtrages, quot converſiones reipublicæ, antevertiſſent? Si *nobis cognoſcantur*, exemplo docti caveamus. Non is ſum, qui contendam, *nihil* eſſe quod corrigi poſſit aut fortaſſe debeat,

beat, in eccleſiâ Anglicanâ. Nævos quoſdam videre videor, quaſi in pulchro corpore, adſperſos. At cavendum, ne hos temerè reſcindendo, ſanguinem quoque ipſum ducamus; et, dum parva et ferè contemnenda auferre ſtudemus, totius corporis vires minuantur. Cavendum præcipuè, ne *hæc parva* pro *magnis* habeamus: ne contemptim adeo exiſtumemus de mundi Domino, quaſi *ſuâ* cauſâ, haud noſtrâ, religionem inſtituiſſet; quaſi ſigna quædam honoris, quem ipſi debemus, naturâ ſuâ arbitraria et mutabilia, pluris æſtimaret quam caſtam et integram mentem, quam pectus forte et benè præparatum ad reſiſtendum pariter blanditiis voluptatum, miniſque adverſantis fortunæ, et ad ſingula officia vitæ humanæ pulchrè et conſtanter exequenda. Statuant homines, ut lubet, de *ſingulis* rebus, quæ in controverſiam venire ſolent; de *totâ* quæſtione hoc tenendum: non poſſe *iſtam* eccleſiam magnoperè reprehendi, quam nos *experti* videmus, ad incrementa literarum et artium, ad juſtam regum auctoritatem, ad pacem ac libertatem populi, ad felicitatem denique univerſorum civium, quamplurimum contuliſſe. Fateor equidem in diſciplinâ Chriſtianâ utilitates hominum in terris nec unicè nec præci-

puè ſpectari: at hoc contendo, in *omni* parte regiminis divini, arctiſſimis vinculis inter ſe conjungi religionem, virtutem, felicitatem.

III. Tranſeundum mihi ad tertiam notam pravæ religionis, earum quas initio commemoravi. Si hanc breviter expoſuero, finem faciam. Nego igitur fieri poſſe ut *iſta* diſciplina ſit à Chriſto profecta, quæ *affectu* magis quam *ratione* homines ad agendum ducit. Religio Chriſtiana, ſi ipſa per ſe ſpectetur, tranquillis oculis et placido vultu incedit; nec unquam, quod ſcimus, furores Pythios imitata eſt, niſi cum homines—ſtulti, dicam, an improbi? vinctam hanc, et malis debilitatam, dementiæ ſuæ inſtrumentum adhibûere. Ex quo fonte plurimi et graviſſimi morbi, non modò in Eccleſiam fluxere, ſed in Res etiam publicas redundârunt. Paucæ enim omninò civitates extiterê, quæ non cædes, rapinas, incendia, perduelliones; omne genus et ſcelerum et malorum, ab his rivis ad ſe tràxerunt. Omnia ſanè *incerta*, ſimul ac à *ratione* receſſeris. Curſus affectuum varius et mutabilis: eoque magis, ſi, præter naturam ſuam, in vana ac imaginaria ferantur. Quod ſi opinio etiam acceſſerit de afflatu numinis;

ſi,

ſi, quò propiùs homines ad inſaniam acti ſint, eò certiùs agitari ſe credant à ſpiritu quodam divino: tum demum prompti ſunt et parati, ad fidem ſpernendam, ad amicitias violandas, ad ſanctiſſima ſocietatis jura ſub pedibus conculcanda.

Factum eſt ignorantiâ, credo, hiſtoriæ, ut dum Romanenſium *fraudes* omnibus pateant, *furor eorum et inſania*, ſi paucos ſcriptores excipias, juſtâ reprehenſione caruerint. Qui horum religionem æſtimare velit ab imagine quâdam nuper depictâ, crediderit eos in *ſuperſtitionem* quidem propenſos, at ab omni *fanatico* errore longiſſimè abhorrere. Nolim vero iſtis hominibus fidem adhiberi, qui, dum ſcribendi famam aucupentur, inveſtigandi laborem prætermittunt: nec æqui ſunt judices inter diſſentientes Chriſtianos, qui religionem eorum univerſam comtemptu ac riſu proſequuntur. Pervolvantur modò annales eccleſiæ, facilè patebit, elegantem illum ſcriptorem, cauſâ non auditâ, pronunciaſſe. Magna etenim pars eorum, qui à pontificibus Romanis inter *divos* relati ſunt, egregium hunc honorem conſecuti videntur, *amentiæ* præmium et incitamentum. Tot religioſorum

ordines, præſidium et columen imperii Papalis, ab *amentiâ* fere omnes originem duxere. Tot bella in gentes barbaras, nullâ prorſus ſpecie aut juris ſuſcepta, aut humanitatis adminiſtrata, non tam ex ambitione aut avaritiâ, quam ex piâ quâdam *amentiâ* ſunt profecta. Cumque celeberrimum illud fœdus Gallicum, contra purioris diſciplinæ inſtauratores, Româ inſtigante, ſuſciperetur; quid duces illius ſpectabant? quid agebant? Nempe, ut, inflammatis vulgi animis, *amentiam amentiâ* repellerent. Cujus quidem ab utraque parte fructus ſimiles conſpiciebantur: in bello crudelitas; in pace nulla fides; plena omnia ſceleribus, proditionibus, vi occultâ et perfidâ, contra Nobiles, contra Reges intentatâ. Quibus omnibus ad examen revocatis, longè ſecus, ac *hiſtorico* noſtro viſum ſit, de religione Romanâ ſententiam tulerim. Ea verò parum contenta eſt homines *ſtultos* reddidiſſe, niſi ex ſtultis *inſanos* faciat.

His exemplis moniti caveamus; non tam de reditu ſuperſtitionis Romanæ, quàm de *novis* quibuſlibet opinionum monſtris, unde leves et inſtabiles vulgi mentes ad ſimiles furores poſſint incitari. *Opiniones* fortaſſe haud ſatis conſideratè

conſideratè dixeram; cum magiſtri illi inſaniæ, qui populum ducunt, minus *doctrinâ* noceant, quam *ratione docendi*. *Noſtri* certè profitentur ſe in nullâ re diſſentire ab inſtitutis et diſciplinâ eccleſiæ Anglicanæ. In hoc tamen *vehementer* diſſentiunt, quod *auctoritatem* eccleſiæ, factis ſi non verbis, reſpuunt et contemnunt. Alii ſcilicet in agris, alii in domiciliis privatis, permulti ad gravè hoc munus nec eruditi, nec inſtituti, cauſam Chriſti ſibi agere videntur; Deoque non hominibus, obtemperandum clamant: *univerſi* auditorum mentes quaſi ſtimulis quibuſdam agunt et perturbant; et, ſi cæteras eloquentiæ artes parum callent, ipſâ vocis et laterum contentione mirantem popellum in furorem rapiunt.

Commemorata ſunt à nobis tria hominum genera, quæ his temporibus eccleſiam noſtram vexârunt. Qui ſi aliis fortaſſe in rebus paululum inter ſe diſcrepent; in iis tamen unde graviſſima pericula impendent, plane conſentiunt, et iiſdem ſtudiis feruntur. Nam et qui *philoſophiam* ex libris ſacris quærunt, et qui *formulas Deum colendi* faſtidioſè magis quam *candidè* excutiunt, et qui *inſanâ prædicatione* audientium animos incendunt; *hi*

omnes

omnes infenſa gerunt pectora contra ſanioris doctrinæ miniſtros: hi omnes de Magiſtratibus eccleſiæ conqueruntur; auctoritatis jugum non ferunt: denique hi omnes tanto animorum æſtu rem agunt, ut metuendum ſit ne ex his ſcintillis gravius aliquod malum in civitate exarſerit. Nam ſi hæ turbæ, etiam in caſtris diverſis, haud contemnendum ſtrepitum edant; quid demum facient, ſi in unum ſe agmen conjunxerint? Si paucorum imperio obtemperare didicerint? Si viâ et ordine bellum gerere? *Eadem* hæc ſemina, haud ita remotis temporibus, in tantam flammam erupiſſe ſcimus, ut Eccleſia ſimul et Reſpublica communi incendio flagrarent. Noſtrum eſt providere quò utramque ſalvam præſtemus, ne iterum ſpargantur et incrementa capiant. Nec dixeris morbum hunc adeò levem, ut minimè opus ſit medicinam adhibere. Morbis naſcentibus facile obſiſtitur: adulti et inveterati medicorum artes contemnunt. Quapropter levitas hæc et inſania popularis omni ſtudio reprimenda eſt; ab iis præſertim, qui, propter vim ingenii, aut eruditionis famam, aut conditionem vitæ, pronis auribus à populo audiuntur. Quod ſiquis me roget, *quibus artibus* efficiendum ſit, ut vulgus hominum

num ad ſaniorem doctrinam perducatur; ut importunos hos magiſtros deſerat ac contemnat, et contentum ſit iis præceptoribus, qui ex inſtituto civitatis religionem doceant: quid *non* faciendum ſit audacter pronuntiem, ut ab omni ſcilicet *vi* abſtineatur; quid *faciendum*, non ita facilè invenio. Vel ſi invenero, malim fortaſſe id ab aliorum *exemplis* diſci, quam quemquam à me commoneri. Adſit modò voluntas, opportunitates defuturas minimè arbitror, vel tela hoſtium depellendi, vel accepta vulnera ſanandi.

FINIS.

BINDING SECT. JUL 3 1968

BX
5133
B36

Balguy, Thomas
Discourses on various subjects

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY